

THE INFLUENCE OF A SHORT-TERM MISSION EXPERIENCE ON
STUDENT ATTITUDES TOWARD THE MINISTRY: A CASE STUDY

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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY
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To Bethel, a Proverbs 31 wife.

To my parents, who, like Hannah, gave me up to the Lord.

Thank you.

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ABSTRACT

Martin Luther College (MLC) has committed resources to a robust program of short-term missions for students who are training for gospel ministry in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS). Students have indicated that participation in short-term missions arranged by MLC has positively influenced their attitude toward this training. A case study of one recent short-term mission provided opportunity for students to reflect on and to identify the positive and negative influences they experienced. Daylight, MLC's short-term mission program, will use the collected data to inform pre-field training, on-field mission work, and post-field debriefing that maximizes the positive influences of the experience, with the goal that students complete training for gospel ministry.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Martin Luther College (MLC) has been charged with preparing ministers of the gospel for the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS). MLC's mission statement declares:

The mission of Martin Luther College is to train a corps of Christian witnesses who are qualified to meet the ministry needs of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) and who are competent to proclaim the Word of God faithfully and in accord with the Lutheran Confessions in the Book of Concord. To fulfill this mission, Martin Luther College carries out all instruction and programs of student life according to the gospel as revealed in the inspired and inerrant Word of God.¹

The majority of MLC graduates will serve in gospel ministry. For example, graduates of the education program receive teaching positions in WELS early childhood ministries, elementary, and secondary schools upon recommendation of the faculty. Humanly speaking, the presidium of the WELS—a committee of synodical officials and presidents of WELS districts—determines the placement of the graduates. People of the WELS profess that God the Holy Spirit actively works through this committee, and the groups of believers issuing the calls, to call Christians teachers to the places and people he would have them serve.

MLC graduates also serve in ministries besides teaching. Some will fill staff ministry needs immediately after graduation. Others will study for pastoral ministry at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. A process similar to the one used to assign teachers is utilized to assign pastors to their first ministries after four years of training at Wisconsin

1. Martin Luther College Mission Statement, <https://mlc-wels.edu/consumer-information/>, (accessed on November 13, 2015).

Lutheran Seminary. Still other MLC graduates will serve in ministry after teaching in international fields, completing an advanced degree, or establishing a family.

MLC strives to carry out its mission effectively. The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, MLC's accrediting agency, writes, "This institution is blessed with faculty and staff members who are exceptionally committed to the mission of preparing students for ministry, who are exemplary in their care for and involvement with students, and who are gracious in their relationships with colleagues."²

MLC's Daylight Short-Term Mission Program

In addition to its rigorous curriculum, MLC seeks to prepare a corps of Christian witnesses qualified for ministry through hands-on ministry experiences. One effective ministry experience has been a short-term mission experience (STM), defined by the authors of *Maximum Impact Short-Term Missions* as "sending messengers to announce with word and demonstrate with deed the Good News that sets anybody free from anything that binds them."³

MLC's Daylight program coordinates efforts to send students on short-term missions. Students are recruited and prepared during the school year for a variety of short-term mission projects. Host congregations also offer important on-field training. Students go temporarily—most will serve as volunteers for a week or two. Others will

2. Martin Luther College Mission Statement, <https://mlc-wels.edu/consumer-information/>, (accessed on November 13, 2015).

3. Roger Peterson, Gordon Aeschliman, R. Wayne Sneed, *Maximum Impact Short-Term Missions* (Minneapolis, MN: STEMPress, 2003).

serve for ten weeks during the summer—some as their summer job. MLC provides financial assistance through travel grants to keep costs manageable.

Student participation in MLC’s Daylight program is robust. The table below demonstrates that over half of all MLC graduates during the 2010-2015 academic years participated in a Daylight short-term mission prior to graduation. The college invests significant time and energy to encourage such involvement, promoting short-term missions and recognizing Daylight volunteers on social media and in MLC publications. But it is not MLC that deserves the credit. To God be the glory for the living and active faith he works in student hearts, and the encouragement for mission work he gives MLC’s campus family. Thanks be to God for moving WELS congregations to utilize MLC students in their mission efforts.

Table 1: Percentage of MLC Graduates Who Participated in Daylight

School Year	Education Grads	Pre-Seminary Grads	Total Grads
2010-11	63/123	30/44	93/167 (56%)
2011-12	62/119	22/36	84/155 (54%)
2012-13	49/105	28/34	77/139 (55%)
2013-14	52/112	20/24	72/136 (53%)
2014-15	53/110	24/30	77/140 (55%)
Total	279/569	124/168	403/737 (55%)

The MLC campus pastor serves as the director of the Daylight program. A student assistant manages social media promotions, communicates with mission agencies and

student candidates regarding details of upcoming trips, and arranges meetings between the Daylight director and students.

The director for women's housing also serves as a Daylight assistant. She maintains MLC's database, tracking congregational requests and student applications. She also interviews students to help Daylight match their gifts with congregational mission needs. Together the assistant and the director debrief all the student teams returning from STMs.

The Daylight director supervises both the Daylight assistant and the student assistant. He is responsible for communicating with mission agencies and mission congregations regarding their ministry needs. He works with the Daylight assistant to match students with the mission trips that best fit their gifts and experience. He trains teams to be spiritually prepared and ready to seize opportunities to share their faith. As a member of MLC's Service and Cross Cultural Learning Committee, the director communicates Daylight activities and explains budget allocations for Daylight work to the oversight committee. He is responsible for both the day-to-day operations of and long-range planning for the program.

The Lord has blessed the Daylight program graciously and generously. First and foremost, since 2000 A.D. the gospel has been proclaimed in more than 1,000 congregations through Daylight short-term missions.⁴ MLC has provided inexpensive help for congregations in need of skilled assistance. Athletes have used their skills to teach sports and the saving truth. VBS teachers have pointed to Christ as the only way to

4. John C. Boeder, *2105 MLC Daylight Statistical Report*, 2015.

heaven. Canvassers have invited thousands of church neighbors to special outreach events and worship services. In some instances, students did little more than hand out fliers or repair storm-damaged homes. Nevertheless, Christ has granted unique blessings from all service in his Kingdom. To God be the glory for using MLC students in his work of sharing the gospel and saving souls.

The Lord Jesus has blessed MLC students as well as the people they have served through short-term missions. Hundreds of participating students have identified numerous gifts, attitudes, and skills gained and discovered on their short-term missions.

Assessing the Daylight Program

MLC's General Education Committee recently conducted an assessment of the Daylight program for the years 2010-2013. The purpose of the assessment was to identify the effect of STMs on student attitudes. The committee was especially interested in how a short-term mission influenced student attitudes toward service to the Lord and to the church.

The Committee members read 248 open-ended reflection surveys collected by the Daylight director. Sixty-eight of the surveys were written by students who had participated in a ten-week paid STM, and 180 surveys were written by students who had participated in one- or two-week STMs.

The survey asked three questions: What did you do on your Daylight short-term mission trip? How will your experience help you in your future ministry? How did this experience enhance a heart of service and develop a servant's mindset?

The table below lists the common themes students used to describe of influence of their short-term mission experience on their attitudes.

Table 2: Student Responses to Daylight Survey, 2010-2013

Theme	% of students doing short trips that noted this theme	% of students doing ten-week trips that noted this theme	Overall percentage of students that noted this theme
Growth in confidence, leadership ability	38%	34%	37%
Experienced the joys & challenges of gospel-sharing	37%	34%	36%
Enhanced communication and interpersonal skills	31%	21%	28%
Experienced diverse types of churches / ministries	24%	16%	22%
Solidified or clarified called worker intentions	21%	22%	21%
Learned outreach methods	19%	22%	20%
Saw that a servant <i>works</i> (diligence)	13%	24%	16%
Gained <i>teaching</i> experience	12%	19%	14%
Grew in faith/encouraged by the experience	16%	0%	11%
Needed selflessness, humility, patience	11%	13%	11%
Intercultural growth	11%	9%	10%
Practiced cooperation	9%	13%	10%

The student survey results demonstrate that Daylight helps MLC carry out its mission. Students indicated that they grew in confidence and leadership ability. Over 20% said the experience confirmed their intention to prepare for gospel ministry. Students felt that they acquired skills for ministry. Their heart for service to the church, community and world increased, as did their understanding of the joys and challenges of ministry. Many of the short-term missions took students to congregations in eastern, western, and southern states, where students gained a broader view of the Lord's work. The one outlier, the lack of growth in faith/experience among those who served on a ten-week trip, can be explained by the similarity of the categorized responses.

The Lord has delivered all these blessings regardless of the type of ministry carried out. MLC does little to control the types of short-term mission opportunities in which students participate. Most of the STM requests have come from mission congregations through a WELS mission agency. Others came directly from the mission field. In all of these opportunities, MLC's first priority has been to serve the needs of the congregation. Not that every mission has been a success. There have been negatives for students and for churches, but those instances are very few.

With all the benefits students have received and all the help given to congregations, it would seem natural that MLC would want to make Daylight short-term missions a part of every student's educational experience. But can MLC be sure that the benefits that students profess are actually coming from their short-term mission experiences? Could the lessons students are learning through their STMs be learned in class? Are these lessons valuable enough to future ministers of the gospel to merit the investment of energy and resources needed to maintain and expand the program? If MLC students are gaining from their short-term mission experiences, how can MLC maximize these benefits for the good of the ministry? How can MLC limit or correct any activities that are not helpful? How can the activities contributing to growth be used in other ways at MLC, in other schools, and in WELS congregations?

There are many ways to document the blessings of short-term missions. For years students have been filling out surveys describing what they learned from their experiences. These surveys could be used to create a picture of student gains. Such a quantitative approach would give solid numbers, but would not necessarily connect the short-term mission experience to the growth cited by students.

There might be value in surveying STM alumni on the long-term transformation, if any, that they experienced because of their short-term missions. However, so much time has passed that it might be difficult to identify the discipleship growth they gained from short-term missions, and the growth they gained in other ways.

A better way, one that directly ties the growth to the experience, would be for the Daylight director to accompany a short-term mission team and create a case study of their experience. In this way he could learn by observation what students did and how their activities impacted them. Student participants would document their impressions in a reflection journal. The director would receive valuable onsite input from pastors and congregational leaders working with the students. He would conduct a focus group with the team, soliciting their impressions while they were still fresh. The hypothesis is that a case study of a Daylight short-term mission will advance MLC's understanding of how a STM influences student attitudes towards training for the public ministry.

Thesis-Project Design

To test the hypothesis, the director will conduct a case study of MLC's annual Daylight short-term mission to Queens, New York. A case study involves careful observations made over an extended period of time, with the understanding that the behaviors being observed cannot be controlled by the observer or the participant. Naturally occurring results provide helpful conclusions as to the cause of those behaviors. So it is important for the director to serve as an observer and not a coach or teacher on the mission trip. Since there may be extraneous variables contributing to the student attitudes

and behaviors, it is important for the director to observe all that is happening, and to take note of the variables that could shape attitudes, including his presence.

The Daylight director will want to accompany a team that is willing to be observed, and to provide reflections. He will ask each student to write their impressions and reflections from the experience in a journal. He will observe the team's interactions in worship and the Easter in the Park activity. He will follow them as they go door-to-door on behalf of the congregation, inviting church neighbors to Easter worship and other activities. He will interview congregational leaders regarding the impact of the experience on the congregation's life and ministry. He will summarize the experience into a narrative highlighting cause and effect where applicable.

Possible Outcomes

What is the transformative effect of a short-term mission? How will the Lord Jesus bless his students studying for ministry? How will he bless the church in Queens and the unbelievers of the community? How will he sharpen skills and clarify thinking about the ministry? How will he sharpen perspectives on the need for the gospel and the challenge of reaching out across cultures? How will the STM influence student attitudes toward preparing for ministry? How long will that influence last? Only the Lord Jesus, head of the Church and giver of church workers, knows for sure. Nevertheless, here are some guesses:

1. Jesus will give the students renewed energy to prepare for ministry. The fellowship and love of the team and the congregation will encourage them.

2. Jesus will give confidence in the power of his Word. He will provide just enough positive interaction to bolster students' skills and motivation to tell others.
3. Jesus will impress on his disciples the urgent need to share the gospel today.
4. Jesus will mature his students so they will welcome service to the Lord and his people. They will rejoice in the positive and the negative experiences.
5. Jesus will mature his students in ways they do not currently grow in a classroom. They will grow in ways that demonstrate short-term missions is a necessary part of training for ministry.

A case study of one Daylight short-term mission will not be generalizable. It may not change attitudes towards STMs, or the ministry. In fact, I must be prepared to acknowledge that the Lord may use a short-term mission to convince a student preparing for ministry that the ministry is not a great fit for that individual. A short-term mission experience will open eyes—some to new opportunities, some to needed corrections. My prayer is that this study will identify additional reasons for sharing the unique blessings of short-term missions with all MLC students.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”¹

Matthew reported that Jesus had compassion on the crowd. How could he do anything different? The mission of Jesus Christ is the mission of the Triune God, and God is love. God loves sinners. Jesus came to carry out God’s plan to save sinners from the consequences of sin, death, and damnation in hell. God is holy, and he demands that his creatures be holy. But humans cannot live the righteous life God demands. Since the fall into sin recorded by Moses in Genesis 3, people have been born sinners. WELS theologian Daniel Deutschlander writes:

St. Paul explains fully what that means when he tells us in Romans 5 that Adam brought sin into the world and, as a result, death and the wrath of God have come down to all from Adam. For God remains holy and righteous. He cannot be indifferent to the sin and certainly not to the rebellion that has robbed him of the honor due him as Creator. St. Paul declares that “sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men” (v. 12). In sum, the sinful human race inherits not only the sinfulness itself but as well its dreaded consequences.²

1. All Scripture references are from the New International Version, 2011, unless otherwise noted. Matthew 9:35-38.

2. Daniel Deutschlander, *Grace Abounds*, ed. Curt Jahn (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 2015), 189.

There is no way that sinful humans by their own powers or efforts can evade the death and damnation they deserve. But God has compassion on his human race. God's Son, the second Person of the Trinity, took on flesh and blood. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a Virgin, so he had no original sin. He obeyed God's Law perfectly. He suffered and died as a payment for all sin. He rose from the dead as the guarantee that he paid the price in full. Jesus saved all people, but only those who trust in Jesus as their Savior receive his salvation.

Knowing this good news of God's love for humans, it comes as no surprise to read that Jesus looked out at the crowds of Jews and was filled with compassion for them. The Holy Spirit inspired Matthew to describe the people as, "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."³ Luther explains their spiritual condition this way, "These two things necessarily befall a flock that lacks a shepherd, for it is unable to feed or watch over itself. In the same way, souls that are left without the Word of God perish of hunger and thirst as long as there is no one who feeds and nourishes them."⁴

Jesus came to feed and nourish them with his Word. Some believed this Word and trusted in him as their Savior. The majority felt harassed, and no wonder. Luther observes, "Once the Word of faith has been lost, people choose innumerable kinds of works."⁵ In other words, what caused such a harassed spiritual condition were the people's vain attempts to save themselves. Misled by work-righteous religious leaders like the Pharisees, many sought comfort in their own obedience to God's Ten Commandments. But the Law can never give the comfort of salvation, only the helpless feeling that comes from a

3. Matthew 9:35

4. Martin Luther, *Luther's Works: Volume 67*. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2015), 81.

5. Luther, *Luther's Works*, 81.

conscience plagued by guilt. Jesus described the people as sheep without a shepherd. Through his message in the mouths of his disciples he wanted to be their Shepherd.

Consider again the compassion of Jesus for these poor souls. To be sure, they were in great need. But to the degree that they placed their confidence in themselves, they were hostile to Jesus. They were acting on the natural hostility of the corrupt, sinful mind. They deserved no compassion. Nor do we. But thanks be to God for his amazing mercy demonstrated in our Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus looked with compassion on the crowds. Jesus has looked with compassion on us. Even better, he has won our salvation and given us faith to believe it.

Jesus was not the only person looking out at the crowd that day. His disciples, probably a larger group from which he later selected the Twelve, were also looking at the crowd. What did they see? Did they see people in spiritual need? Were they filled with compassion for people in spiritual need?

Jesus' words of instruction indicate that they needed to develop his compassionate perspective. This should not surprise anyone. Believers in Jesus are sinner/saints, *simul justus et peccator*. And the sinful nature is curved in on itself, *incurvatus in se*. Luther confirms, "Man can seek only his own interests and love himself above all things. This is the essence of all his faults." ⁶

Jesus wanted to bless the disciples with his compassionate perspective. He wanted them to be like him, eager to meet the spiritual needs of harassed and helpless sinners. But how do you change the natural inclination to focus on self? How do you influence the disciple of Jesus to look outward instead of primarily inward?

6. Edwald Plass and Ewald Plass, *What Luther Says*, 8th Printing edition. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1997), 1270.

Jesus told them to pray that the Father would send messengers to preach to the crowds. Then Jesus sent them into the mission field. He sent them on a short-term mission so that, in the words of Luther, “they may learn what they ought to think, to say, to do, to expect.”⁷ A.B. Bruce calls this sending, “an educational experiment for their own benefit.”⁸

Jesus Taught the Twelve to Look Outward

Before Jesus sent them, he trained them. He taught them by his perfect example of love. In Matthew 9, he told the disciples to look out at the crowd of people. But he didn’t call the people harassed or helpless. He called them a harvest field, and he told his disciples that in that field was a great harvest waiting to be brought in.

What makes this important? Because while the number of souls to be reaped was great, the workers were few. Who were the workers in the harvest field of that time? Jesus and John the Baptist? Jesus’ followers? Clearly more harvesters were needed. Jesus gave this privilege to his disciples.

What did the disciples think as they looked out at the crowds? Their corrupt sinful natures might have tempted them to ignore the crowds. After all, didn’t the disciples have troubles? Why should they care about people they hardly knew when they had their own troubles?

The disciples might have fought the temptation to look down on the crowd. Weren’t these people feeling spiritually helpless because of their own sinful pursuit of

7. Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 87.

8. A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, Fourth Printing edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1974), 99.

helpless spiritual practices? That is an offense to a holy God. Would God want his disciples to care about such sinners?

Did the disciples also fight the temptation to look for an easier crowd to help? Helping the helpless and harassed could mess up their lives and push them out of their comfort zone.

It would have been easy for the Twelve to find reasons not to look at the crowds with compassion. Therefore, before he sent them out, Jesus directed them to look outward—to see with the eyes of faith the spiritual needs of others. He also directed them to look upward. To look upward is to trust in and depend upon their Father in heaven.

Jesus Taught the Twelve to Look Upward

We might expect that Jesus would have turned to the disciples and said something like, “Look at the crowds. You should go and help them.” Instead, he pointed them to the Lord of the harvest. Jesus said, “Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”⁹

Why did he urge them to pray? Jesus urged them to pray because the Father, the Lord of the harvest, is the believer’s source of compassion. Their compassion would come from the Lord, who longed (and still longs) to gather harassed souls into his kingdom. Without the Father’s love, the disciples would have been just as lost. Without the Father’s love, the disciples might have harassed the helpless crowd with encouragement to obey the law as a way to earn God’s favor. With the Spirit’s help, the

9. Matthew 9:38

disciples knew the solution was (and still is) Jesus, the Savior of all. With the Spirit's help, they were willing to share Jesus—even if that meant leaving their comfort zone.

Jesus also urged the Twelve to pray because those who serve in the harvest field need the love and support of the Father as they go. It is clear from our reading of Jesus' Mission Discourse in Matthew 10, that the disciples would need his guidance and strength. The harvest field was filled with dangers and dangerous people intent on their failure. Without the Father, their efforts for him would fail.

Jesus sent the Twelve because he knew a short-term mission would impact them for the future. On the day of Jesus' ascension, he told the Eleven, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."¹⁰

Jesus had big plans for the Twelve. With his omnipotent love, he would empower his disciples to carry out his plans. For example, Jesus promised that the Spirit would fill them with the words to speak and the boldness to speak them. From these Spirit-empowered efforts the good news of salvation would spread. Their work would not be easy; Jesus said as much in his Mission Discourse in Matthew 10. But the lessons he taught with his example and his words would guide them. To prepare them for their mission after his ascension, Jesus sent them on a STM before his ascension.

Jesus Teaches the Same Lessons to Today's Disciples

Little did the Twelve know that they would be the answer to their own prayer for workers to enter the harvest field. How easy it is to forget that we are too. We are the

10. Acts 1:8

answer to this continuing call of Jesus to reach the harassed and helpless with the good news of salvation. In his Word he calls us, as he called them, to look out at the crowds with compassion. He calls us to respond to the need by looking up to our Father and trusting in his love and support. He sends us with a powerful message. With his law and gospel, he heals the hurting to whom he sends us.

I believe the Lord of the harvest also has in mind the harassed and helpless people his messengers will meet in the future. It has been said that God never wastes an experience. In truth, God does nothing without purpose. That purpose might be the salvation of someone his disciples meet on a short-term mission, or it might be the lesson his disciples learn and apply as they meet someone months or years in the future.

Trends in the Christian church come and go. Short-term mission trips have impacted literally thousands of Christian churches and organizations. Is this a trend that will stay relevant? If so, the church needs to look to Jesus. Why did he send the Twelve (Matthew 10)? Why did he send the 70 (Luke 9)? Along with Christ's compassion for the harassed and helpless, I believe he sent them because there were important lessons for mission and ministry his disciples could learn best by doing. These lessons are evident as we prayerfully consider his Mission Discourse in Matthew 10.

First, Jesus wanted his disciples to look outward: He wanted to bless them with a compassionate perspective towards the crowd. He wanted to help weak sinner/saints overcome the temptation to neglect or ignore the spiritual needs of others.

Second, Jesus wanted his disciples to look upward: He wanted them to depend in humble faith on the compassion and power of their Father in heaven. Jesus wanted his

disciples to look up because they would suffer for his name. Blessings come to those disciples who persevere by looking up to their Savior in humble faith.

What did the disciples think when Jesus told them he was sending them into the harvest field? Were they excited to go out on their own and be like their Master? Were they eager to be itinerant preachers with a powerful message to share, yet no earthly means of support? Were they picturing themselves being received like rock stars, as Jesus sometimes was? At times crowds crushed around him, praising him and begging for his help. Or were they picturing themselves battling unbelief at every turn?

The disciples were probably not anticipating that the harvest field would be difficult and dangerous. So when Jesus said, “All men will hate you because of me,”¹¹ they might have wondered if they were right for this mission, and if the mission was right for them. They might have wondered why Jesus, their dear Savior, would want them to suffer in his name and for his sake.

Jesus sent them because he wanted them to experience the highs of being part of God’s saving activity. He also wanted them to experience the lows of serving him in a sinful world, where Satan wars against the success of the gospel. This is the way of the cross—the way Jesus would walk to save sinners by laying down his life. Discipleship is the way of the cross. WELS theologian Daniel Deutschlander explains, “The cross of suffering on the outside and the consequent anguish on the inside is necessary as a preparation for hearing the gospel and for clinging to the gospel. It is our cross that drives us to his Cross.”¹²

11. Matthew 10:22

12. Daniel Deutschlander, “Don’t Be Afraid! Cheer Up! It’s the Cross!” (Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Essay File, June 14, 2010), 11.

As the disciples would experience anxiety and troubles, Spirit-given faith would lift their eyes above themselves to the Father who sent them. Spirit-given faith would drive them back to their Father's promises to deliver his disciples from their own sin, from death, and from the attacks of the devil and a sinful world. It is one thing to know this in theory. It is another to know it by experience. On a mission trip the disciples would learn by experience. They would be blessed because of it.

Jesus sent his disciples because he wanted them to look up to the Father and out at the needs of others. I believe he also wanted them to look ahead. Specifically, he wanted them to look ahead to their work of proclaiming his gospel after his physical return to heaven. This STM was meant to change their outlook and shape their activities in the future. Through the blessings he poured out on them and the challenges they overcame, Jesus trained future missionaries to be like him, willing to go to the ends of the earth.

He still sends his disciples today. To the degree that we trust in Jesus and follow his example, these same lessons will continue to be a blessing to the church.

The gospel writers Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record Jesus sending his disciples on an STM to the lost sheep of Israel. Mark's abridged version gives us a glimpse into the results of these disciples' work: "They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them."¹³

In Luke 9 we read that Jesus sent out the Twelve in pairs. His teaching to prepare them for their mission reminds us of his more extensive teaching in Matthew 10. Luke tells us that the disciples returned with joy, yet Jesus told them, "Do not rejoice that the

13. Mark 6:12-13

spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”¹⁴ He wanted them to find their greatest joy in looking up.

With so many excellent examples, including the missions of the Apostle Paul and the evangelist Luke, why focus on Jesus’ Mission Discourse in Matthew 10? Jesus sent the disciples with an eye toward their future work as missionaries. He could not overlook the urgent spiritual needs of the lost sheep of Israel, or the opportunities to help them. Jesus urged them to go with the encouraging truth: “The harvest is plentiful.”¹⁵ At the same time, the Twelve would be the missionary leaders of the church after Jesus’ ascension. They had much to learn that would be applied as he sent them to the lost sheep of Israel and eventually to the ends of the earth.

Jesus’ focus on the Twelve in Matthew fits well with the focus of Martin Luther College (MLC). Through short-term missions, MLC prepares students for their mission field by sending them into it. Students learn about the people they may one day serve. They learn to look up to the Father who is sending them, and will send them in the future. They learn from the ministries and methods they experience in the field. What Jesus said to his disciples in Matthew 10 still guides and blesses his disciples today.

How would we compare the harvest field of Israel in Jesus’ day with the harvest field in the United States of America, the primary mission field of MLC students? Such a comparison goes beyond the scope of this essay. One similarity is clear—the need for the gospel is great, perhaps greater than ever, in North America. Today’s disciple making disciples will want to be prepared to proclaim the gospel and to endure persecution, just

14. Luke 10:20

15. Matthew 9:37

as in Jesus' day. The words of Jesus are life and strength for all who go in his name, in any and every age.

Matthew 10:1-4
Jesus Sent the Twelve Armed with Divine Authority

Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.¹⁶

Were the twelve disciples surprised when Jesus called them together and authorized them for their mission? After encouraging them to pray for workers, he in essence told them that they were the answer to their own prayers, as well as the prayers of his other followers. The Lord of the harvest answered the urgent plea for workers by sending them!

After this point in Jesus' ministry the Twelve became an official group that followed Jesus full time. Others—both men and women—followed him, but not as members of the Twelve, the group of apostles that would become the missionaries and leaders of the early church. The word “apostle” comes from a Greek word meaning “a naval expedition or the sending out of a fleet.”¹⁷ The Twelve were those sent out by Jesus as his representatives.

It was fitting that Jesus, the Lord of the church, called these new leaders to their important work. What a privilege for them to receive from him “authority to drive out

16. Matthew 10:1-4

17. W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *Matthew 8-18: Volume 2* (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2004), 153.

impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.”¹⁸ Jesus sent them with a powerful message, and power to confirm the truth of that message. He gave them the ability to drive out evil spirits that troubled certain Jews. He also gave them power to heal every kind of illness afflicting the people. This power came from Jesus’ own compassion for the earthly and spiritual needs of the Jews.

This is mind-blowing authority for a sinner/saint to exercise. The disciples had no power over the devil or disease that they had not received from Jesus. Thankfully, Jesus had shown them by example how to use his power wisely. Their mission was simply an extension of his mission. And his mission was to heal hurting souls.

Jesus did not heal in order to gain a following for his power alone, but for his gift of salvation. The earthly problems of the people were connected to spiritual problems. And Jesus himself was the solution. People have greater needs than Jesus’ power to heal diseases or set them free from demonic activity. Sinners need his power to set them free from the damnation of sin by creating faith in their hearts. And let us not forget Jesus’ power put to use in living a perfect life under the law. We rejoice that he set aside his power so he could die as the substitute for sinners.

Jesus used his divine power and authority, and still does, to save sinners. That was the only way his disciples were to use the powers he gave them.

There are far more questions than answers regarding Jesus’ choice of the Twelve. What was it about these individuals that made them the ones Jesus wanted? It is notable that nothing about them is included in Matthew’s written record, except Matthew’s designation as a tax collector. No accomplishments. No characteristics that made them

18. Matthew 10:1

desirable as apostles. From our reading of the Gospels, we know none of the Twelve was perfect. One even fell away and betrayed Jesus to his enemies. While we are not told how Jesus chose them, we can learn much from what Jesus told his disciples as he prepared them to go.

Matthew 10:5-8
Jesus Sent the Twelve to Bring the Kingdom in Word and Deed

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, proclaim this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.”¹⁹

Why did Jesus limit the mission of the disciples to the lost sheep of Israel? A.B. Bruce theorizes that the disciples were not ready to reach the Gentiles because they needed to grow in love through divine illumination.²⁰ While there is undoubtedly some truth to this theory, it is perhaps simpler to view the mission of the Twelve as an extension of the mission of Jesus himself among the Jews. The Twelve were to do what they had watched him do, among the same people he had served. In addition, this mission to Israel would highlight the important truth that Jesus had come as fulfillment of the promise first made to the Jews. LCMS theologian Gibbs explains, “Jesus has come to fulfill Israel’s Scripture and to bring to fruition the promises God made in and to them.”²¹

By giving the Twelve a limited call, Jesus is endorsing the ministry model of so many STM opportunities. STMs often focus on a specific group of people for a specific,

19. Matthew 10:5-8

20. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, 100.

21. Jeffrey A. Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1-11:1: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture*. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 507.

limited length of time. Our Savior can certainly accomplish his saving purpose through such missions.

As previously discussed, Jesus gave the disciples power to confirm the truth of the message they proclaimed. The message of the disciples was simple and brief: “the kingdom of heaven is near.”²² Bruce suggests that such a simple message was fitting for disciples still growing in their understanding of the gospel.²³ It reflected the message they had heard from Jesus and John the Baptist.

Luther explains their message this way:

This is the preaching of the New Testament. Not to preach ceremonies or the laws of the world or anything other than the kingdom of heaven, that is, eternal life. This comprehends the Word of God concerning righteousness, grace, the forgiveness of sins, and victory over death, the flesh, the world, the devil, and all evil.²⁴

If we follow Luther here, we conclude that the disciples were sent to proclaim in word and deed that eternal life through membership in God’s kingdom was near. What made the kingdom near? The kingdom was near in the person of Jesus, the Christ of God. The One in whose name they healed was the One who gave eternal life. Perhaps the disciples, as well as their hearers, were not ready to explain how that eternal life would be gained by Christ. But their simple message was clear: The Christ has come to bring the kingdom to you. Trust in him for eternal life.

This is the message MLC Daylight wants student short-term missionaries to proclaim. This is the message that makes the STM a saving activity. We do not want to be critical of works of love and compassion. Jesus sent his disciples on such a mission,

22. Matthew 10:7

23. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, 101.

24. Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 89.

but with a message that saves. Without that message, the goodness of such compassion is limited to earthly needs.

Jesus admonished his disciples with the words “Freely you have received, freely give.”²⁵ Luther comments that Jesus was directing his disciples away from any thought of selfish gain, “for he knew that there would be godless who would say or do everything for the sake of gain.”²⁶ Instead, Jesus wanted his disciples to trust God’s care and be concerned only for the advancement of the kingdom of God. In other words, as they went, he wanted them to look up—in confident trust in his providential care.

Matthew 10:9-15

Jesus Prepared the Twelve to Be Welcomed and Rejected

Do not get any gold or silver or copper to take with you in your belts—no bag for the journey or extra shirt or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep. Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet. Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.²⁷

At first glance, Jesus’ instructions as to what the disciples should bring, and not bring, make little sense to our modern ears. These words had a major impact on the life of Saint Francis, who is known for his austerity. But today’s public ministers of the gospel are used to receiving a salary to meet their daily needs. Those serving on STMs are used to receiving congregational support for their daily needs.

25. Matthew 10:8

26. Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 89.

27. Matthew 10:9-15

Jesus' words probably made perfect sense to his disciples. Consider the example Jesus had set for them: the disciples were accustomed to accompanying an itinerant preacher who had no means for securing his daily needs. As they traveled with Jesus, they were quite obviously in need of support. And God wants his people to express their love for him by caring for his messengers. Luther states, "It is a great gift, a grand honor, if someone is worthy to receive My ministers and to take them into his hospitality, for that person is serving as host to Me and My Father."²⁸

Scholar Alfred Edersheim shares some interesting insights on this. Jewish Rabbis often instructed Jews to appear at Temple without a staff, extra shoes, or a money belt. This instruction probably served the same function as Jesus' words to his disciples, namely, that when they went to Temple, they were not on business but on their Father's business.²⁹ Those who serve on short-term missions will want to remember the same thing. They are where they are to meet, to greet, and to have fun, but above all to do their Father's business. They can trust God's people to support their earthly needs.

A.B. Bruce fittingly called this section of Jesus' teaching "Care not."³⁰ Jesus wanted his disciples to go into his harvest field without any earthly preparation. He told them, "Do not get any gold."³¹ Because of the urgency of the mission there was no time for training beyond the training they had received at the feet of Jesus. As for earthly needs, they were to trust God to provide. By this Jesus taught them to live by faith in his care. If they had to go without, he would soon provide what they needed. The Lord of the

28. Luther, *Luther's Works*, 93.

29. A. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah*. 1st American Edition. (New York: E. R. Herrick & Co., 1886), 643.

30. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, 109.

31. Matthew 10:9

harvest would put people in his field who would care for their physical needs. With this confidence, the disciples were able to share the message about Jesus Christ.

Jesus was concerned that his disciples not change the message in order to win crowds. It was a temptation, and still is, to soften or even eliminate portions of the Bible's teaching that might be offensive to weak or unbelieving souls. Luther picks up on this thought, "For here Christ is mainly seeking to train His ministers for integrity, desiring that they should be devoid of any avidity and desire for wealth, glory and power and that they should be content to make use of what is at hand." ³²

Instead of avoiding controversy or currying favor, God wants his harvesters to share his Word without concern as to how it might be received or who might be offended. Why is this so important to our Savior? It is his Word. Sinner/saints, no matter how well meaning, cannot enhance the message of God. His Word is flawless and flows from a flawless love to save. Luther concludes, "But this office of the Word seeks after something else; it has its eye set on something different: eternal salvation and the glory of God." ³³

What about those who will not receive the Word with faith? What about those who will reject Christ and his messengers? The harassed and helpless do not always see themselves that way or recognize the great rescue being offered in the gospel. So Jesus prepared his disciples to be rejected: "If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet. Truly I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town." ³⁴

32. Luther, *Luther's Works*, 91.

33. Luther, *Luther's Works*, 91.

34. Matthew 10:15

What made “shaking the dust off your feet” an act of judgment? Lutheran theologian Martin Franzmann wrote, “The guilt of the town was measured by the greatness of the gift rejected.”³⁵ Ulrich Luz called this act “neither a symbolic discharge of responsibility, nor a curse, nor a pronouncement of judgment; it is an execution of judgment.”³⁶ Luther added, “God does not deem the godless worthy of even the honor that the dust under their feet should cling to His ministers.”³⁷ Clearly, Jesus took very seriously how the lost sheep of Israel received his message. His goal was saving faith, something only the Spirit in the Word could cause. The disciples could not bring anyone to faith by their own power. What they could do was proclaim what would happen to those who rejected the kingdom.

Why mention Sodom and Gomorrah? Their wickedness had been so great that God destroyed them and made them a burned-out wasteland. Their overthrow became a warning of God’s wrath toward sinners. Davies and Allison write, “In the present text, Jesus’ prophecy assumes greater privileges require greater responsibility. It is an unprecedented honor to hear the disciples’ proclamation, and an incomparable failure to reject it.”³⁸

How often do we prepare those serving on a short-term mission for rejection? That would certainly not be an attractive reason to sign up for a mission. Yet we do a disservice to God’s STM messengers if we do not discuss how to handle the rejection

35. Martin H. Franzmann, *Follow Me: Discipleship According to St. Matthew* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), 88.

36. Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8 20 Hermeneia Series* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 81.

37. Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 94.

38. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 178.

they will face for the sake of the gospel. We do a disservice to God's future ministers when we do not discuss how to handle those who reject Jesus as their Savior.

To shake the dust off your feet was an action that demonstrated to those who rejected the gospel that the disciples had done their work faithfully, and the rejection was the fault of those who heard and rejected and not the fault of the messengers. This must have been an action that could be clearly understood, and explained. The purpose was to give warning to those who rejected and reassurance to those who preached to them.

What would be an effective way to express God's judgment today? There is more that disciples can do than walk away from an unbeliever with a heavy heart. Would a warning at the door be appropriate? Would a prayer for God's mercy be clear? What kind of action would express sorrow for rejecting the gospel?

Jesus said much with the simple reference to dust and Sodom. Rejecting Jesus is serious. Unfortunately, it happened often in Jesus' day, and still does today. It is important to remember that the way of Jesus is the way of rejection. It was a way of hardship and rejection for him, and it will be for his disciples. But his disciples do not go on their own. Jesus will comfort those lamenting the hardhearted. He will comfort those suffering at the hand of the hardhearted. In his own time and way, the Father will administer the consequences of rejecting the gospel.

As Jesus' disciples carry the cross, they will want to look up. The Lord of the harvest who sent them will take care of them. He will provide for their needs, usually through the kindness of those who trust in Jesus as their Savior. What a joy to see Jesus keep this promise today! When MLC students go on missions, they bring some money and necessities. However, they often rely on church members to provide lodging, food,

and transportation. Those church members generously support them, often beyond what the student workers expected. Truly, “the worker is worth his keep.”³⁹

Jesus also wants his disciples to look out at the harvest field. He wants his disciples to go to places they have not been; to help people they do not know. With his love he motivates his followers to go outside their comfort zone for no reason except to proclaim the Kingdom of God. Even if Jesus’ message is rejected, he wants his messengers to keep proclaiming it. Some will believe.

Jesus wants those who go to be content. He instructed his disciples to stay in the home that welcomed them. He wanted them to receive with joy and thanksgiving whatever care God provided. He didn’t want them seeking out better circumstances. I am thankful to say that the STM workers from MLC have demonstrated this godly contentment.

Jesus wanted his disciples to look up and to look out, but also to look ahead. He wanted them to look ahead to the Day of Judgment. That day is coming, and it will end the time of going from town to town proclaiming the kingdom of God. Then it will be too late. There is urgency to Jesus’ mission.

Matthew 10:16-23

Jesus Prepared the Twelve to Face Conflict and Persecution

I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. Be on your guard; you will be handed over to the local councils and be flogged in the synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his

39. Matthew 10:10

child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. Truly I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.⁴⁰

“I am sending you out like sheep among wolves.”⁴¹ With these words Jesus emphasized that he was sending his disciples out. He was responsible for their being in pleasant situations, as well as adverse places and situations. He wanted them in those very places because his gospel must be heard. In those circumstances, God’s power and love would shine. Luther summed up Jesus’ point when he wrote, “But these things are done so that our faith may not be derived from human strength, but from divine power, with which God intends to preserve his sheep, even in the midst of wolves and the most hostile of enemies.”⁴²

What did Jesus mean by comparing the disciples’ mission to sheep living among wolves? Davies comments:

The rabbis applied the proverbial adage about being wise as serpents and innocent as doves to Israel’s situation amidst the Gentiles. Thus one strongly suspects that the two parts of 10:16 implicitly reinterpret traditional images. The sheep are no longer the Jews but the disciples of Jesus, the wolves no longer the Gentiles but Jews hostile to the Christian mission; and those who are wise and innocent are not Jews surrounded by Gentiles but rather Jesus’ followers in a situation of persecution.⁴³

The picture Jesus painted was one of conflict, division, and disruption. It was not an inviting picture, nor should it be. Jesus was not looking for disciples who wanted to use the church to carry out a vendetta. He was not looking for disciples who delighted in

40. Matthew 10:16-23

41. Matthew 10:16

42. Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 95.

43. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 8-18*, 181.

the sword. He was looking for disciples who would not run in fear. He wanted to make messengers who would persevere, disciples who would apply his wisdom and serve God and his people wisely.

Jesus wants his disciples, now, as then, to “be shrewd as snakes and innocent as doves.”⁴⁴ For Jews, doves were a “model of integrity, defenselessness, and purity.”⁴⁵ The serpent was a model of cunning. With this image Jesus is teaching his messengers to be fearless, but not foolhardy.

Jesus warned his disciples that Jews who congregated at synagogues might turn against them, possibly accusing them of blasphemy for calling Jesus the Son of God. For this, or for criticizing the Jewish leaders who rejected Jesus, the disciples could be flogged. The Apostle Paul was. However, the warning was far more serious. Some would lose their lives for the sake of the gospel. John the Baptist serves as an example, as does Jesus himself.

Jesus said, “You will be hated by everyone because of me.”⁴⁶ The Greek verb used here suggested that Jesus meant that his disciples must be hated by everyone. As Bruce wrote, “do not be so simple as to expect all goodness.”⁴⁷ In fact, the opposite is true: apostleship will be “active suffering and a suffering activity.”⁴⁸ Jesus never expounded on why this was so. The Twelve would learn by experience why they were hated; they needed to learn from Jesus how to respond in a way that did not jeopardize their mission.

44. Matthew 10:16

45. Luz, *Matthew 8 20 Hermeneia Series*, 88.

46. Matthew 10:22

47. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, 109.

48. Luz, *Matthew 8 20 Hermeneia Series*, 94.

Luther sums up well the conduct of a disciple of Jesus under persecution: “Next we ought to do good to all so that we can boast, ‘The wicked have nothing to lay to our charge by any right, but the good, and everyone else, have something for which they should by all right give thanks.’”⁴⁹ Jesus wanted his disciples to maintain their mission regardless of any threat. That mission was to represent Jesus with their lives, use his power to relieve suffering, and proclaim his message with their mouths. He willed that their “cunning not be directed toward harming their enemies, but to survival and sharing of the gospel.”⁵⁰

What is interesting about this section of Jesus’ teaching, and that which follows, is that some of his instruction applied to the lives of the disciples after his resurrection and ascension, and not this immediate STM among the Jews. Renowned New Testament scholar Ulrich Luz wrote, “Many of Jesus’ statements were fulfilled after Easter.”⁵¹ For example, these words of Jesus applied to their worldwide mission after his ascension: “On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles.”⁵² Jesus intended to use this initial mission experience to prepare them not only for the immediate mission among the Jews, but also for their long-term service to him as apostles for his church.

As frightening as it must have been for fishermen to be brought before kings and councils, it must have been even more comforting for them to hear Jesus’ promise to give them the words to speak: “When they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how

49. Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 95.

50. R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Commentary on the New Testament edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 22.

51. Luz, *Matthew 8 20 Hermeneia Series*, 16.

52. Matthew 10:18

to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”⁵³ Luz comments, “Augustine applied this text to preachers’ everyday situations and then had to defend himself against the suggestion that one would no longer engage in sermon preparation.”⁵⁴ Is not the stress that comes from standing in front of God’s people without adequate preparation its own reward? Jesus wanted and still wants his messengers to study and meditate on his Word, trusting the Spirit working in the Word to give them the right words for the time of proclamation.

I can attest to this promise of Jesus being fulfilled in my ministry of visiting church neighbors and prospects. A disciple can never be sure of the question, concern, challenge, or criticism that he will meet at any given door. More than once I have walked away from a door wondering how I was able to say what I said, something far wiser and more apt than the answer I could have come up with after hours of Bible study. This is a testimony not to my prowess, but to the power of the Spirit and his desire that his messengers seize every opportunity to share the gospel. Jesus so loves the world that he is not willing to allow his weak human messengers to make a mess of his mission. Luther confirms, “We must have an utterly naked trust in God alone, since every human being is a liar and God alone is true.”⁵⁵ Luther is not just referring to those that his messengers might meet, but to the messengers themselves. We can crumple like a house of cards under pressure. We can easily twist God’s true Word to make it seem more acceptable, or to avoid confrontation or conflict. We trust God’s Spirit to enable us to speak his truth.

53. Matthew 10:19-20

54. Luz, *Matthew 8 20 Hermeneia Series*, 90.

55. Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 146.

Much has been written about the words, “When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. Truly I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.”⁵⁶ What did Jesus mean when he told his disciples that they would not be able to visit all the towns of Israel before his return? I agree with Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod author Jeffrey Gibbs, who states, “Matthew’s gospel here and in chapter 23 point to the fall of Jerusalem as divine judgment, once—for-all vindication, of Jesus and his ministry in relation to the Jewish leaders of Israel, who by and large opposed him and cooperated with Roman authorities to put him to death.”⁵⁷ In other words, the return of the Son of Man referred to in these verses was the judgment of God against Jerusalem in 70 AD. Prior to 70 AD the focus of early church mission work was the Jews. After 70 AD, Jesus expanded his disciples focus to the unreached people groups of the world. As Jesus said in Acts 1, “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”⁵⁸

Jesus would tell his disciples who do short-term missions today the same thing he told his disciples in Matthew 10. Be fearless, but not foolhardy. Instead of expecting victory at every opportunity, expect opposition. Expect conflict. However, don’t let that conflict keep you from sharing the good news.

His words remind us to pray for patient endurance. Perseverance does not come naturally to a believer still weighed down by the flesh. We long for the easy, for the quick and positive response, for the comfortable and comforting. Mission work will not be that

56. Matthew 10:23

57. Gibbs, *Matthew 1*, 23.

58. Acts 1:8

way. Plant seeds of the gospel anyway. Pray for the Spirit's work in sinful hearts. Pray for the kindness to love and pray for our enemies.

“The church is an anvil that has worn out many hammers.”⁵⁹ The fact that I am writing this, and you are reading this, is evidence of that truth. The fact that millions of Christians travel across the world every year on short-term missions is further evidence of this truth. “God will not allow the Gospel to be suppressed by enemies or our own weakness.”⁶⁰ Thanks be to God for his amazing grace in preserving and extending his kingdom! Thanks be to God for allowing his disciples to suffer for his name!

While his disciples look outwardly, they will want to keep looking up. The triune God who sends his disciples also accompanies and blesses along the way. In this section of Matthew, the Son sends his followers into difficult situations. Not because he does not love them or want to bless them. Just the opposite. He sends them on a difficult path because of his love for them and the lost.

The Son sends. The Father watches over. As we will see in the next section of Matthew 10, we are so valuable to our heavenly Father that he has even numbered the hairs on our heads. Nothing outside of his watchful care will harm us.

The Spirit who lives in us by faith promises to speak through our mouths when we are in trouble. What a great comfort for us, who know all too well our limitations. We pray that we will trust his wisdom when he gives us the words to say.

If it had not occurred to the disciples before, it surely dawned on them after these words of Jesus: The mission of Jesus would be their lives on earth. Jesus had no other

59. Franzmann, *Follow Me*, 88.

60. R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel*, 1st edition. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1964), 393.

plan to reach the planet with the gospel besides sending his disciples. This work would occupy their earthly life, and, in many cases be the cause for the end of that life.

How did the disciples understand his comment about “going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes?”⁶¹ When would this return take place? Why would he need to return since he was already among the lost sheep of Israel? His disciples would have had plenty to meditate upon as they went from town to town. The return of the Son of Man implies some kind of judgment in the future. This was the time to tell people the good news. It still is. We look up and seek our Savior’s help to take advantage of our opportunities to share the gospel.

Matthew 10:24-33

Jesus Prepared the Twelve to Confess the Kingdom Fearlessly

The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household! So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.⁶²

This writer agrees with the comments of Calvin on this section of Jesus’ instruction: “These things are matters more for meditation than for explanation, for they are sufficiently clear in themselves.”⁶³ What Jesus said is not difficult to understand, but

61. Matthew 10:23

62. Matthew 10:24-33

63. Luz, *Matthew 8 20 Hermeneia Series*, 97.

quite difficult to put into practice. Think of Peter's response to Jesus' prediction of his death and resurrection, recorded in Matthew 16: "This shall never happen to you."⁶⁴ We also remember Jesus' reply, "Get behind me Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."⁶⁵

Jesus understood the tendency of humans to want the crown without the cross. Therefore, in these verses he spoke clearly and forcefully to the Twelve about the sin of allowing intimidation or fear to silence their confession of Jesus' kingdom. This instruction must have weighed heavily on their hearts. Was Jesus demanding more than his rag-tag Twelve could produce? Recall that these men were not statesmen or religious leaders, but fishermen and farmers. None had the depth of education that we might have expected would prepare them for their mission. Nevertheless, they had the words of Jesus in their minds, the strength of Jesus in their hearts, and his example as a guide. Jesus was enough. He always is. What a great comfort for all of the non-professionals who go on short-term missions!

Jesus was well positioned to speak about fear because he understood fear. He must have battled it every day he faced the assaults of Satan and the fierce opposition of the Pharisees. His prayers in Gethsemane revealed the inner battle he fought against fear. He understood the pain and suffering which was about to roll over him like a tidal wave. But his prayer was ultimately, "Your will be done."⁶⁶ And that is the prayer he wants his disciples to pray as well. If the mission of Jesus requires suffering and pain, we pray that we will not give in to the flesh and retreat. We pray that the Savior himself will

64. Matthew 16:22

65. Matthew 16:23

66. Matthew 26:42

strengthen us to speak the truth in love, even if it costs us our very lives. That's how important Jesus' mission is. Luther comments, "The cause for which I am suffering is the greatest one, and his example, after which I am suffering is beyond compare."⁶⁷

Jesus attacked fear in his disciples with the law: "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell."⁶⁸ Jesus urged his disciples not to fear those who could kill only their bodies. The One to truly fear was the One who could destroy their bodies and their souls in hell—that is God. Out of fear of God's anger at their sinful weakness, he urged his disciples to testify to his truth. Not that Jesus was establishing an unforgivable sin. Instead, he warned them about the seriousness of this particular sin. Luther comments, "Rather, at every moment the life of your body as well as of your soul is in the hand of God alone, just as theirs is. Why therefore should you offend the eternal Giver of life and death for the sake of those who are slayers for a moment but cannot give life at any moment?"⁶⁹

Every sin is serious. Every sin is damnable. Thankfully, the precious blood of Jesus Christ paid for every sin. He suffered the eternal punishment of hell for all sin. Those who trust in Jesus as their Savior are forgiven. Forgiveness in Christ motivates disciples to testify to the truth. So does fear of letting down such a gracious God. Bruce put it this way, "This fear drives out every other fear—that the disciples might deny the cause of Christ's kingdom."⁷⁰

67. Luther, *Luther's Works*, 102.

68. Matthew 10:28

69. Luther, *Luther's Works*, 102.

70. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, 109.

Jesus' promise to confess his messengers also motivates his messengers. Luther explains Jesus' promise this way: "You are my preachers before a few, in a corner, to lowly creatures on earth. But I, for my part, will be your confessor and preacher in heaven before My Father and the angels."⁷¹ How much greater is Christ's confession! He will proudly proclaim in heaven the name of those who confess his name on earth. What a comfort!

Jesus gave additional motivation to speak his name when he compared the value of his messengers with the value of the sparrows. Luther explains, "And he allows none of you to be afflicted apart from his definitive knowledge and will, even though it may appear that He has forgotten and abandoned you. Certainly if He does not neglect even the most worthless sparrow, much less does He neglect any one of you?"⁷² Jesus is not promising that his disciples will be able to avoid persecution. Rather when they are persecuted, their Father will comfort and care for them. He will ultimately deliver them from all suffering by taking his believers to heaven.

Jesus' perseverance was both motivation and model for his disciples. If he, despite opposition, kept traveling from town to town showing compassion and inviting sinners to receive eternal life, how could his disciples do anything less? How could they expect that they would receive better treatment than their master and teacher?

Who were the enemies who called Jesus Beelzebul? The common folk with whom Jesus lived and to whom he most directly ministered were less likely to do so. Occasionally they were compelled by their leaders to attack Jesus' power over demons, as they did in John 8. The Jewish religious leaders, especially the Pharisees, openly

71. Luther, *Luther's Works*, 110.

72. Luther, *Luther's Works*, 108.

accused Jesus of alliance with the devil, which is what the title Beelzebul came to mean. Any accusation against Jesus carried with it serious consequences for the one making the accusation. Jesus made it clear that the consequences were serious because those accusations were based on blind unbelief.

In these clear and challenging words, Jesus teaches his disciples the true nature of following him: “Discipleship is the place where the idea of providence and fatherhood of God can be spelled out and practiced.”⁷³ Jesus wants his followers to go in his name, fully aware of his Fatherly goodness and care. When they are intimidated, Jesus invites his people to look up. Their Father loves them. Why fear mere mortals? The God of heaven has their back.

Jesus’ disciples will also want to look outwardly. However, as Gibbs writes, “Do not fear your opponents, because the day will come when every secret of God’s plans in Christ—all of men’s hidden sins and rebellion—will be made known to all.”⁷⁴

Matthew 10:34-42

Jesus Prepared the Twelve to Find Life in the Kingdom

Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn ‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’ Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it. Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person’s reward. And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.⁷⁵

73. Luz, *Matthew 8 20 Hermeneia Series*, 165.

74. Gibbs, *Matthew 1*, 515.

75. Matthew 10:34-42

There are two complementary thoughts highlighted in this final section of Jesus' instruction to his disciples. One is the cross: "To follow Jesus is to embrace martyrdom. The cause is not our own weakness or mistakes, but Jesus himself."⁷⁶ Just as Jesus had to go the way of the cross to earn salvation, so Jesus' disciples must be willing to suffer for the sake of Jesus.

However, Jesus does not speak only of a cross here, but of comfort that comes from his compassion for his disciples. He calls for his followers to suffer, but not without his strength to persevere. He calls for his disciples to love him, while at the same time promising his love for them. He calls his disciples to confess him, while at the same time promising that he will confess them.

Luther, who has much to say from his experience carrying the cross of Jesus, offers this encouragement: "Let this be the sole and solid glory: to perish, to be destroyed, despised, trampled, scorned, hissed at; and to become nothing on Christ's account, just as for us he became nothing, leaving us an example."⁷⁷

Recall that Jesus speaks of the cross not as an option: it is a necessity for those who employ his power (think of the Twelve on their mission) and proclaim his message of grace. Renowned Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod theologian Daniel Deutschlander offers these additional thoughts on the necessity of the cross: "The closer the disciple follows Jesus, the heavier the cross. The heavier the cross, the greater the blessings it brings. The greater the blessings it brings, the more necessary the cross."⁷⁸

76. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 35.

77. Luther, *Luther's Works*, 118.

78. Deutschlander, "Don't Be Afraid! Cheer Up! It's the Cross!" 10.

How does the gospel bring a cross? The gospel creates conflict because it puts to death the sinful flesh's plan of salvation, work-righteousness. The flesh fights against the idea of grace. Satan incites the flesh to battle against trust in Jesus. The world attacks what it believes is intolerant and unloving teaching, namely the gospel's claim that Jesus is the only Savior. The sword of conflict is unavoidable for those who believe and share the gospel. It is a cross that Christians bear. Nevertheless, as this cross causes Jesus' followers to lean more on their Savior, Jesus' greater strength empowers them to carry the cross. Because of the cross, Jesus' disciples develop more than they would have without the cross. As Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod professor Gibbs observes, "Those who lose this earthly life for the sake of life with Christ find they have 'real life' that lacks nothing."⁷⁹

Why does the Lord Jesus honor and attend his disciples? Because he loves them. Through them, he will gather a harvest of disciples in his harvest field. Luther observes, "Therefore, it is a glory and consolation for us who preach the Word that we are certain that we are God's instrument, that our tongue is God's tongue, that our voice is God's voice."⁸⁰ Those who speak for Jesus have the comfort of knowing he will protect his representatives so they can complete his mission. Those equipped by the Spirit to speak his name will have his attention and protection. They do not need to respond to violence with violence: "Passive acceptance is the only possible response to the violence that results from the division caused by the Gospel—the text speaks of no other violence."⁸¹

79. Gibbs, *Matthew 1*, 520.

80. Luther, *Luther's Works*, 120.

81. Luz, *Matthew 8 20 Hermeneia Series*, 112.

In this section of Matthew 10 Jesus mentions three types of missionaries: prophets, righteous men, and disciples. Rather than establishing a hierarchy, Jesus seems to be using synonyms for his messengers. The rewards of grace Jesus promised corresponded to the acts of love done for the disciples. What does this mean? God promises to bless our work for him in his own time and in his own way. The blessings he gives, by grace, may be material or spiritual. They will come when God deems best, and as he deems best. It is important to remember that the motivation for loving Jesus' messengers is not a reward of grace, but the gift of forgiveness and eternal life through faith alone in Jesus Christ. Any reward of grace, whether given by a gracious God in time or eternity, cannot be compared to the gift of salvation won by Christ.

Were the disciples overwhelmed by the response they received to their preaching and healing mission? Likely not. Matthew does not provide any follow-up to their short-term mission. But Mark 6 and Luke 9 give us a brief glimpse into the aftermath. Mark writes, "The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.'"⁸²

Instead of gaining insight into what the disciples did and learned, the press of duty cut short Jesus' debriefing, at least for the moment. Jesus followed up their interrupted debriefing with teaching that led to the famous feeding of the five thousand. What a fitting way to conclude this experience. After time in the mission field, the disciples were likely motivated to learn more, to ask questions, to strategically prepare themselves for

82. Mark 6:30-31

the next time they would share Jesus' kingdom. Jesus' teaching would increase their understanding. In the miraculous feeding of the five thousand, Jesus also confirmed his compassion for the harassed and helpless by caring for the people's earthly needs.

Jesus sent (and still sends) his disciples so that they will look up to him. If discipleship is an activity of carrying the cross, then mission work makes that activity that much more difficult. The offense of the gospel can cause all sorts of challenges and heartaches. But what better position for a Christian than leaning on the strength of Jesus? Jesus promises here that he will look with compassion on those he sends, as well as those they are sent to tell. The more his disciples carry the cross, the more they learn to rely on the compassion of Jesus.

Jesus does not send out his disciples to do their own thing. He sends them out to be like him. He gives them compassion as they look to his example. What will they see in the example of Jesus? They will see compassion for the hurting. They will see suffering for the sake of the kingdom. The cross of suffering should not surprise them. Division for the sake of the gospel does not indicate something is wrong, or that those who experience such division are necessarily doing something wrong. It is the natural human response to the gospel. Nevertheless, in some, the Spirit creates faith that trusts grace and mercy in Christ. For these believers, and for the opportunity to serve the Savior who has so graciously saved us, the price is worth it.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Mission of the Church

What is the mission of the church? This might be the most important question with which the church can wrestle. For if the church gets right its mission, then its actions, in the power of the Spirit, will accomplish God's purpose and extend his kingdom.

Missionshift, a book of essays addressing global mission issues in the third millennium, serves as a forum for experts in theology and missiology to advance opinions on the church's mission, from Social Gospel to *Missio Dei*. Some argued for mission activity focused on relieving human suffering. Contrary to this emphasis, in his Great Commission, Jesus tells us:

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'¹

This is not the only commission that the risen Christ has given his church. He actually gives a similar evangelistic invitation to his believers in each of the gospels, using different words. The exact words are not as important as the direction and empowerment those words provide. In this case, Jesus sends his church into the world to

1. Matthew 28:16-20

make disciples through the gospel. These disciples will become disciple making disciples that continue to reach out with the gospel until Jesus returns.

In his Great Commission Jesus crafted his message carefully. Jesus commanded his disciples to make disciples. He did not send his disciples with the primary mission to make the sick healthy, or to make the poor wealthy. Not that Jesus wants his church to ignore the needs of the sick or poor, but what matters most is faith in Jesus as Savior. Faith is not natural for the spiritually blind. But in the gospel the Spirit enables the blind to see. In *MissionShift* Ed Stetzer writes, “Both Jesus and His followers operated in this fashion by discerning the fact—which some are obscuring today—that for the human heart to implement both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-39), it must first be regenerated by way of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20).”²

Short-term Missions

A recent movement that has impacted missions in the church is short-term missions. In a way, these opportunities are not all that recent. God has used STMs to distribute his kingdom blessings since the age of the Old Testament, when God sent believers like Jonah to call Assyrian unbelievers to repentance. In the New Testament era, Jesus sent his disciples to the lost sheep of Israel (Matthew 10), and the apostle Paul to the Gentiles. Today the risen Christ sends his people to accomplish his saving purposes using short-term missions.

2. David Hesselgrave and Ed Stetzer, eds., *MissionShift: Global Mission Issues in the Third Millennium* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2010), 216.

God wants all of his disciples to be involved in this work. In the Great Commission Jesus promised his presence and power would go with his disciples as he sent them into the world. Jesus told those disciples gathered around him for the Sermon on the Mount, “You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world.”³ Note that Jesus did not say, “You need to be.” He said, “You are.” By the power of the Holy Spirit in the Word, believers are transformed into disciples of Jesus who make disciples of Jesus by being light—and by shining the Light into the darkness of unbelief.

Through the work of the Holy Spirit God empowers all of his people to participate in his great work of making disciples for time and eternity. He empowers every Christian through the gospel. He does not limit himself to credentials like a theological degree. The woman at the well to whom Jesus spoke in John 4 had no theological credentials. In fact, she was a very recent convert, having just heard Jesus testify that he was the promised Messiah.⁴ Yet we are told in John 4:39 that, “many of the Samaritans from the town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony.” She typified what Paul later wrote, “I believed, therefore I have spoken.”⁵

What makes short-term mission trips such an important activity for churches who wish to reach Americans? Jason Mandryk, author of *Operation World*, describes a startling shift in the United States away from organized religion: “Since 1990, there has been a pronounced decline in the overt affiliation to organized Christianity. This loss is not to other religions or new religious movements so much as a rejection of all organized religion—the non-religious bloc nearly doubled from 9% in 1990 to 16.5% in 2010.”⁶

3. Matthew 5:13, 14

4. John 4:26

5. 2 Corinthians 4:13

6. Jason Mandryk, *Operation World*, Operation World Set (London: IVP Books, 2010), 864.

Clearly there is much evangelistic work to do in the United States. Martin Luther College's Daylight program connects students preparing for full-time gospel ministry with churches in the U.S. looking for help in sharing the gospel. According to unofficial records, more than 2000 MLC students have served the missions of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod in North America since the year 2000.

Short-term missions have been popular in the church beyond this small Midwestern campus. In the book *Maximum Impact Short-Term Mission*, author Roger Peterson reports that in the United States, there were 120,000 participants in 1989, 450,000 in 1998, 1 million in 2003, and 2.2 million in 2006. He cites the following reasons for the popularity of short-term missions:

The basic nature of short-term mission allows swift, immediate response by any believer—regardless of age, culture, or experience—to the action explicitly demanded by the Gospel; allows temporary engagement by Christian people not called, or not yet called, into full-time professional ministry (realistically that's the majority of the church); allows lay non-professionals opportunity to perform what God commands of all disciples—regardless of age, gender, race, culture, training, social status, economic status, or experience.⁷

Considering the large pool of candidates created and empowered by the Holy Spirit, it makes sense that Christians with willingness, mobility, and resources will want to serve. Their desire goes beyond pray, pay, and obey. They are eager for the blessings those who serve will give and receive from the Father's hand. This certainly describes the students of MLC, who are infused with a can-do attitude toward ministry.

7. Roger Peterson, *Maximum Impact Short-Term Mission: The God-Commanded Repetitive Deployment of Swift, Temporary Non-Professional Missionaries* by Roger Peterson. (Minneapolis, MN: Stem Press, 2003), 16.

The Blessings of Short-term Missions

In a 1991 study, Peterson and Peterson identified some of the measurable blessings cited by those who served on short-term missions, such as, “substantial changes in prayer, financial giving, commitment to world mission, mission-related activities and education, and in feelings about returning to the mission field.”⁸

The Petersons also noted that the positive behaviors resulting from the experience diminished with each ensuing year: “The data merely suggests the sooner follow-up is implemented, the greater likelihood of facilitating favorable Kingdom responses—whatever course they may be.”⁹ This useful insight into the limited power of the experience to enhance a person’s evangelistic zeal should shape the follow-up programs of all who organize STMs. Thankfully the Holy Spirit, who is not limited to working through an experience, continues to energize disciples with zeal in the gospel.

Although the primary purpose of a short-term mission trip is sharing the gospel for the benefit of the intended receivers, there are some additional benefits to appreciate. For example, when team members serve outside their comfort zones, God may open their eyes to new insights about themselves. Roger Peterson suggests that, “God may use such a situation to bring to the surface specific gifts and abilities of which these short-term missionaries were previously unaware.”¹⁰ What a blessing such a process would be for college students who are learning about themselves and how they can best serve the Lord.

8. Peterson, *Maximum Impact*, 143.

9. Peterson, *Maximum Impact*, 144.

10. Peterson, *Maximum Impact*, 234.

For Martin Luther College students, such trips can also provide valuable training. According to Peterson, “Seminaries and Christian schools should take note: this type of cooperative training has potential for offering the best training for Christian ministry. The balance of Biblical study and theological training with a hands-on mission environment offers the best of both worlds for future missionaries, pastors, and church leaders.”¹¹ Along with experiential learning, participating students gain a broader view of the Lord’s work in the world: Peterson continues, “The interaction of North American short-term personnel with Christians and non-Christians in other cultures offers a tremendous opportunity to help those from both cultures expand their understanding of the universal nature of the church and of both culture’s myopic worldview paradigms.”¹²

The authors of *Maximum Impact Short-Term Mission* have listed other insights gained and spiritual blessings received by both the goer-guests (team members), and the host receivers (local Christian groups with whom the team members work), in addition to the intended receivers—the targets of Christ’s love in word and action. Chapter five of this essay will explain the blessings identified by the MLC Daylight team on its STM.

The opportunity to build the kingdom is among the most significant blessings of short-term mission trips. In their book, *Mack and Leeann’s Guide to Short-Term Missions*, the authors highlighted this noteworthy blessing: “Short-term missions take us to places where risks for the gospel are rewarded with opportunities to build the kingdom—a world where those small risky steps of faith in God’s hands become giant leaps of learning, growth and glory to God.”¹³ In Luke 15 Jesus tells us that heaven

11. Peterson, *Maximum Impact*, 234.

12. Peterson, *Maximum Impact*, 235.

13. J. Mack Stiles and Leeann Stiles, *Mack & Leeann’s Guide to Short-Term Missions* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2000), 17.

rejoices when one sinner comes to repentance. When Jesus wept over Jerusalem, his anguish came from the refusal of the Jewish people to believe that he was their Messiah.

¹⁴ Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 2:4, “God wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”

Participating in God’s plan to save sinners is an undeniable privilege for unworthy sinners who were themselves saved by God’s grace in Christ. By that same grace, it could be the testimony of the gospel on a short-term mission that brings a lost sinner to faith in Jesus as Savior.

On the other hand, it is important not to measure the value of a short-term mission strictly by the number of converts that came because of the mission effort. In his *Short-Term Mission Workbook*, Tim Dearborn writes, “The church of God does not have a mission in the world. The God of mission has a church in the world!” ¹⁵ God is in charge of all mission work: He can convert through the message delivered on a short-term mission or he can harden hearts. He can announce judgment through that message. He can also shape short-term mission workers for their future work and the people he will reach through them in the future. This is an important emphasis at MLC, where our main purpose is to develop church workers for the WELS.

Another blessing God gives through STM experiences is Christian fellowship. The bonds of love grow as believers meet and serve together with each other. This is a special blessing for MLC’s Daylight workers because they bond with Christians that share their common faith.

14. Luke 13:34

15. Tim Dearborn, *Short-Term Missions Workbook: From Mission Tourists to Global Citizens*, Workbook edition. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2003), 15.

Daylight would like to see deeper and more meaningful fellowship develop through long-term partnerships with mission and churches that allow for repeated visits. Mack and Leeann Stiles make a strong case for building partnerships: “Some churches and fellowships,” they write, “make decade-long commitments to a site that allows for two wonderful things to happen: relationships with nationals and greater cultural understanding.”¹⁶

The Stiles maintain that improved cultural understanding increases the ability to offer better training for those unfamiliar with the culture and ministry. Knowledge of the setting and its people also makes it easier to identify the kinds of people who will work well in that particular setting.

The authors explain that such reciprocal relationships between short-term missionaries and their host churches “give us an insider’s view and enable us to move quickly from being a bumbling foreigner to an effective ministry either alongside or in a support role of our hosts.”¹⁷ Continuing partnerships with mission fields also nurtures long-term connections. Returners and those connected to short-term missionaries who have served a place in the past will often receive updates on the ongoing results of the short-term mission efforts.

Considering the mission of MLC, partnerships with churches seems especially fitting. Not that the same students will serve the same congregations year after year. But some will. Some STM workers will share their experiences with the new teams.

Because the members of WELS financially support MLC, partnerships will allow many of our students to bond with people who are supporting their college

16. Stiles and Stiles, *Mack & Leeann’s Guide*, 49.

17. Stiles and Stiles, *Mack & Leeann’s Guide*, 130.

education with their offerings to WELS. Some students could one day serve with the very people with whom they served on an STM.

MLC's goal is to secure partnerships which will be reviewed every few years to ascertain the value of the short-term mission for the students as well as the congregation. While serving the same congregation for a mutually agreed upon time has many benefits, Daylight will want to be careful not to take over the ministry work that the congregation members could do themselves if the short-term workers were not present. A process of review for partnerships will be important for maximizing kingdom benefits.

One of the great benefits of STM opportunities is that God can use the experience to spark a missional mindset in his future church workers. Moving from a cloister mindset, an internal focus, to a missional mindset, an external focus, is one of the most important attitudes MLC looks for in student growth from STMs. But it isn't easy. Sinner/saints naturally focus on themselves. America's consumer culture turns attitudes toward what the church can do for me, rather than how the church can serve a particular community. If that community has a negative reaction to the gospel, the disciple can be tempted to stop trying to reach out at all.

How can short-term missions spark a missional attitude? Consider that STMs, properly carried out, are less about personal fulfillment and more about meeting the spiritual needs of others. Gospel proclamation lifts our eyes off self and onto the needs of others. As an example, consider how Jesus announced forgiveness to the thief on the cross. He was so laser-focused on saving people that he had no time for self-pity, even while he was suffering for the sins of the world. Though sinner/saints cannot attain the perfect heart of Jesus, his example models the self-less, sacrificing love we want.

Another blessing of short-term missions is a feeling of community among team members. STM's bring people together with a common purpose. In his *Short-Term Missions Workbook*, author Tim Dearborn points out, "This is one of the reasons God sends us in mission: to learn to delight in differences and demonstrate to the world the quality of community that Paul describes in Galatians 3:28."¹⁸

How will short-term missions bring a feeling of community to those who don't or aren't able to participate on the trip? Support through prayers and gifts builds community. Sharing the blessings of a mission trip with the larger body of believers can unite the church around the common goal of proclaiming the Good News that makes disciples.

Short-Term Missions Are Mixed Blessings

Discussing the future of missions, Hesselgrave and Stetzer, in their book, *MissionShift*, predicted that western Christians would carry out the mission of the church using STMs. Not everyone agrees that this is an effective strategy. Well-known author and mission scholar Ralph Winter used the pejorative 'drain money' to describe short-term missions.¹⁹ He wrote, "The massive trend to send out young and old for two weeks will continue to drain money from more serious mission, adding helpful education to the local sending churches but very little direct or indirect contribution to missions."²⁰

Using resources for volunteers to serve missions raises the question, what is the best expenditure of God's money? Is it best to allow professionally trained missionaries to make the most efficient application of it for the nationals? Would it be best for

18. Dearborn, *Short-Term Missions Workbook*, 23.

19. Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *MissionShift*, 251.

20. Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *MissionShift*, 250–251.

nationals to use the money themselves? How worthwhile for the Kingdom is it to spend significant funds on disciple-making missions for laypeople?

Sincere Christians have come up with different solutions for funding short-term missions. Given the educational goals being met through Daylight, MLC has made a financial commitment to help all students defray the cost of mission travel. The college is convinced the blessings of student and Kingdom growth make this a good investment for our school and synod.

As long as western Christian churches have freedom to decide where they will go and what they would like to do, there will be questions about the wisdom of investing money in short-term missions. Ralph Winter also questioned the impact of these trips on those who serve the mission fields full time: “Is there a saturation point where field missionaries find their energies sapped from engaging locals by having to serve as guides for laypersons from home? Has this saturation point been reached? If the trend continues, what will the missionary task look like?”²¹

This is an important question. Some mission agencies have concluded that the saturation point has been reached. They have stationed volunteer hosts in “popular” fields to take the burden of hosting short-term volunteers away from the field missionaries. Others have limited the number of trips to specific fields.

Some critics of STMs have raised questions about the people and places served by short-term missions. Studies show that only 13 percent of short-term missionaries go to a country within the 10-40 Window, a rectangular area of North Africa, the Middle East and Asia between 10 degrees north longitude and 40 degrees north latitude, which

21. Hessegrave and Stetzer, *MissionShift*, 251.

includes the least reached and most hostile mission fields in the world. Usually, short-term teams go to a country where they can work with an existing church. They also favor nations that are easier to enter and cost less to visit, especially those in the Caribbean.²²

Not sending mission resources to the most needed areas is a troubling practice. On the other hand, how can non-professional short-term missionaries be expected to tackle a challenge like sharing the gospel in the 10-40 Window? It would be foolish to expect that they will be able, with minimal training in language and cultural sensitivity, to do what veteran missionaries prepare for years to do. To be sure, there are probably ways they could plug into the ministry plan of those working in a field—even a tough field. But a rule of thumb ought to be that the work of short-term mission workers should be age and experience appropriate.

So what good are short-term missions? Many who have studied this question have concluded that STMs provide valuable mission experience, necessary mission awareness, and—for pre-ministerial students—renewed desire to persist in preparing for ministry. Short-term missions also promote spiritual formation and can create growth in discipleship.

As director of MLC's short-term mission program for 18 years, I have learned that these trips can be mixed blessings. Any endeavor, no matter how well intentioned, is still conducted by sinful people who are serving sinful people. David Livermore explains in *Serving With Eyes Open*:

The biggest problems in short-term missions are not technical or administrative. The biggest challenges lie in communication, misunderstanding, personality conflict, poor leadership, and bad teamwork. All too often we try to respond to these challenges by attempting to change surface-level behaviors rather than getting at the assumptions and

22. Hesselgrave and Stetzer, *MissionShift*, 240.

convictions behind our behaviors. We learn the dos and don'ts about how to act when we go somewhere, yet it seems to make little difference in how we actually interact cross-culturally. We come home with zealous descriptions of how we've changed, yet within a few weeks, our lives look pretty similar to how they looked before the trip.²³

God still blesses these efforts, but sinners need to consider how to minimize the mistakes that can create obstacles to the blessings God wants to give. According to Livermore, American short-termers tend to see their trips in terms of what they will give. Sometimes well-meaning laypeople and pastors seem to think that God's work in a particular area began when they arrived. The truth is that God's work is often already thriving in areas to which God's people go to serve, and will succeed according to God's blessing long after the "expert" workers are gone. When passionate workers radiate a, "thank the Lord we are here to help you" vibe, those who are being served or helped become alienated, and obstacles to hearing the gospel are built.

Sometimes STM do not deliver the blessings they were intended to bring. Livermore gives the example of data collected by VerBeek in his famous study of STMs, "Through the data collected, VerBeek found no lasting difference, positive or negative, on the Honduran families and communities whose homes were built by North Americans compared to those who never saw a short-term missions team."²⁴

Much could be said about why the Hondurans, in this specific example, felt ambivalent towards the team that traveled to work and witness to them. Was the work done well? What were the attitudes of the workers? How was the gospel incorporated into the work? A knowledgeable native might be tempted to think that money spent on a trip

23. David A. Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence*, Updated edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 16.

24. Livermore, *Serving With Eyes*, 57.

could be more wisely spent by natives to hire locals to do the same work. But did they come to this conclusion because they did not appreciate the gospel message that was shared?

According to Livermore, too often American Christians place too much focus on what is being accomplished by the “experts” who have spent the big bucks, and not enough focus by the goer-guests on building relationships with and learning from those they have come to serve. He cautions, “Local ownership means more than inviting participation or calling for input. It means letting the local churches actually direct and shape what we do in our cross-cultural efforts; they ask us if we want to be involved rather than vice versa.”²⁵

Livermore’s cautions and concerns are valid. MLC is able to minimize many of the challenges he raises by working in cooperation with churches in our fellowship. Congregations know the students they support, and the students develop a relationship with the churches they serve. Still, it is important for Daylight to evaluate the work being carried out. Are MLC students simply doing the work that members are not—but should be—doing? MLC will do well to review long-term partnerships with this in mind.

Another shortcoming that Livermore identifies is the need for deeper reflection by the goer-guests. “All too often, the short-term experience ‘eludes any significant reflection on the deeper assumptions and attitudes that structure one’s view of God, of themselves, and of host strangers.’”²⁶ I have witnessed this phenomenon as well, hearing students talk about how the people they served, though from a completely different culture, were really just like them. This perception betrays a lack of understanding, a lack

25. Livermore, *Serving With Eyes*, 94.

26. Livermore, *Serving With Eyes*, 106.

of reflection, and a mind stuck on the superficial. A good question to consider is: What can STM leaders do to make thoughtful reflection and long-term transformation more common among the college students who participate in short-term missions every year?

Training That Equips Short-Term Missionaries

Livermore does more than raise red flags. He offers useful solutions. He argues that goer-guests need to be trained in cultural intelligence—what he calls CQ: “Let’s stop thinking about short-term missions as a service to perform and see it instead as another expression of living in the way of Jesus, which includes giving and receiving from our brothers and sisters in Christ globally. Let’s think about missions as a time when we are responsible to learn.”²⁷

Another point relative to cultural intelligence is overcoming the rugged individualism of American culture to think in terms of community. Livermore comments, “The goal of my spiritual maturity is not just for me. I’m called to mature with my brothers and sisters in the faith, for the sake of my brothers and sisters in the faith—both my local church community and the community of God’s people all over the world past, present, and future.”²⁸

We do well to heed Livermore’s warnings. In the next part of this paper we will review best practices that seek to limit the negatives he describes below and maximize the blessings of STM:

Self-serving mission can be described as ‘Christian parachuting,’ a decontextualized ‘dropping in’ to a needy situation just long enough to distribute beneficial goods that sometimes places unwanted stress on a beleaguered community. These kinds of so-called mission trips are more like sightseeing than

27. Livermore, *Serving with Eyes*, 132.

28. Livermore, *Serving With Eyes*, 133.

genuine service and ministry to a group of people. We cannot truly serve those we do not know and love. However, as we enter into deep relationships with those we serve, we, in a small way like Jesus, take on others' burdens as our own and begin to truly lay down our lives so that those we serve may encounter the life of Jesus.²⁹

Excellence Standard One: God-Centeredness

The seven standards articulated in *The Seven Standards of Excellence Workshop Workbook: A Code of Best Practice for Short-Term Mission Practitioners*, provide valuable guidance to develop an effective STM program. I will review and comment on each of the seven standards and their application to MLC's Daylight program.

The first standard states,

An excellent short-term mission seeks first God's glory and his kingdom, and is expressed through our:

- 1.1 Purpose—Centering on God's glory and his ends throughout our entire STM process
- 1.2 Lives—Sound biblical doctrine, persistent prayer, and godliness in all our thoughts, words, and deeds
- 1.3 Methods—Wise, biblical, and culturally-appropriate methods which bear spiritual fruit³⁰

This God-centered standard is vital because American Christians worship the idol of quantativity. They measure success by results. If Christians on an STM grew in faith and insight, then the STM was a success. If the church added prospects or even converts, then the STM was a success. If the task of kindness was accomplished, then the STM was a success. Thank God for these quantifiable blessings. But God's people rejoice not only in the blessings they can see, but also those they can't see. *The Seven Standards of Excellence Workshop Workbook* summarizes this way:

29. Livermore, *Serving With Eyes*, 167.

30. Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions, *Seven Standards of Excellence Workshop Workbook: A Code of Best Practice for Short-Term Mission Practitioners* (Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions, n.d.), 19.

We seek first and foremost God's glory and his kingdom as our primary purpose, and we passionately pursue his redemptive purposes in all that we strive to do, to be, and to accomplish within our entire STM process (pre-field, on-field, post-field). Although we openly acknowledge and plan for the needs, goals, and benefits for all participants involved (senders, goers, and receivers), we do so in submission to God's glory, his kingdom, and his ends.³¹

It is vital to leave the results of STM in the hands of God. Why? We cannot discern God's kingdom ends. God's ways are hidden. He says in Isaiah 55:8, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways." Leaving the results in the hands of God takes the pressure of success away. It allows believers to serve with complete confidence that God will accomplish his purposes, seen or unseen, measured or not. These comments from the editors of *The Seven Standards of Excellence Workshop Workbook* express it well:

We desire that all our STM methods and activities produce lasting fruit (John 15:16). We acknowledge that such fruit can be souls, fruit of the Spirit, and any level of Kingdom growth or transformation in the lives of any of the participants. We further acknowledge that we may not always see the spiritual fruit in the time or in the way we had hoped, and that other people whom we may never meet may also be part of the fruit-bearing process; some plant, some water—but God makes it grow and produces the fruit.³²

What I appreciate most about these comments is that they render null the arguments raised by some in STM circles pitting discipleship growth against mission growth. When a short-term mission is God-centered, neither is more important. Neither is the focus. The focus is doing all to the glory of God, and welcoming his creative hand to distribute blessings as he sees fit.

Some well-meaning Christians implement a business model to discern the value of short-term missions. Did the mission achieve the goals of the host congregation? If

31. Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions, *Seven Standards*, 19.

32. Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions, *Seven Standards*, 20.

not, should the effort be discontinued? Was the lack of results the fault of the goers? Was it the fault of the host congregation? These kinds of questions have very limited value in evaluating work in the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Did Jesus demand a certain number of converts when he sent the Twelve in Matthew 10? No, he sent them to serve the lost sheep of Israel with his message and with the power to confirm the authority of his message. The results were in the hands of the Father.

This does not mean that Christians should not seek to be wise stewards of God's money when it comes to all mission endeavors. But God-centeredness transforms all efforts on behalf of Christ's kingdom into blessings—not just the results. For example, it is difficult to put a monetary value on personal spiritual transformation or an increased mission mindset. Thankfully, God knows and wills the ends he has in mind. He also provides the funds for the work he wants to accomplish.

This is not to say that anything goes. The best short-term missions will be those that give disciples an opportunity to proclaim in word and demonstrate in deed the good news of Jesus Christ. The gospel is necessary, since it is the power of God to create and sustain saving faith. Not all STMs will be designed to proclaim the gospel in the same way. But all STMs will want to encourage gospel sharing in some way.

How can those involved in short-term missions accomplish God-centeredness? In pre-field training they will want to walk the narrow middle road between expectations for self-transformation and expectations for results in souls won for Christ. They will want to pray for humility and openness to God's will and work. They will want to remain in the Word as a team, building a sense of unity around the God who sent them.

If STM designers and workers can keep God-centeredness as the first standard, all of the rest of the standards will fall into place. If the first standard is missing, all the rest will be a struggle to implement and accomplish. God-centeredness sets the tone for the planning, the activity, and the perception of the results. When pleasing and serving God is established as the goal, there will be enhanced cooperation between the partners who implement a short-term mission. This is important because it sets the stage for the second standard.

Excellence Standard Two: Partnerships

The second standard states:

An excellent short-term mission establishes healthy, interdependent, on-going relationships between sending and receiving partners, and is expressed by:

- 2.1 Primary focus on intended receptors
- 2.2 Plans which benefit all participants
- 2.3 Mutual trust and accountability ³³

Perhaps the most important thought in this second standard is that primary focus is on the intended receptors. Having just established the fact that the primary focus is pleasing God, why shift focus onto intended receptors? Those who promote these standards would not see this as contradictory. Here is their explanation:

Second only to seeking first God's glory and his kingdom (Standard #1), we pledge that the primary purpose is for the sake of our intended receptors—and not merely for each other. We acknowledge that if the primary purpose of an STM is for discipleship of the goer-guests, or if the primary purpose is to provide an educational cross-cultural experience (important as these agendas are), that the STM partnership has failed in its primary focus on the intended receptors. ³⁴

33. Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions, *Seven Standards*, 21.

34. Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions, *Seven Standards*, 21.

The key to understanding this somewhat contradictory conclusion is to remember that a short-term mission is a disciples' response to the Great Commission to make disciples. Yes, those who go will develop as disciples. God will make them stronger disciples through the experience. But God wants the spiritually lost to be found. He wants the spiritually blind to see. He wants the unbeliever to believe in Jesus as Savior. So the mission will want to focus on how to do that. Why send disciples far away, using valuable resources, if they will not share the gospel? Why bring disciples to far away congregations, using valuable resources to plan and implement outreach programs? How important it is for all participants to unite around the goal of God's glory accomplished in the Great Commission.

How will goers, senders, receivers, and all others involved create empowering partnerships? The Christians involved will want to be transparent about the reciprocal benefits of the partnership. They will want to clarify the objectives of each short-term mission, and evaluate when it is completed. Even before the objectives are set, the partners will want to agree on the values and expectations. For MLC students, this will mean serving with those who confess the same faith as the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Not that Christians of other denominations are not good enough: But for MLC's purposes, it is best to promote like-mindedness in teaching and practice.

One of the greatest challenges in such a relationship is to communicate to the host congregation that they are just as valuable as the students who come to serve them. Too often the students are seen as the experts and the energizers for ministry—the ones who can do what the congregation might struggle to do. However, the hosts and receptors are

just as much the teachers as the students who come to serve. Daylight goes can and do learn valuable lessons from them.

Excellence Standard Three: Mutual Design

The third standard complements the second quite well. If a short-term mission program is built on partnerships, the wisest use of those partnerships is to work together on the planning and implementation of the STM:

An excellent short-term mission collaboratively plans each specific outreach for the benefit of all participants, and is expressed by:

- 3.1 On-field methods and activities aligned to long-term strategies of the partnership
- 3.2 Goer-guests' ability to implement their part of the plan
- 3.3 Host receivers' ability to implement their part of the plan ³⁵

Collaborative planning would seem to be a natural outcome of a working partnership. Unfortunately, it's really not that simple. For example, often STM volunteers will apply for a specific activity because it has already been planned. Their responsibility is to be boots on the ground: athletes with skills in a particular sport, or musicians skilled in various instruments. What attracts them to the particular mission is the planning that has already been carried out by the receiving congregation.

Where is the collaboration in such a situation? Well, mutual planning will take place regarding other aspects of the short-term mission: who does which specific tasks, how free time will be used, how meals will be served, etc. The real purpose of this standard is revealed in this sub point:

We commit to screen, select, and train goer-guest participants based on the mutual design of Standard #3, who will place themselves in a learning, humble, servant, teachable position; who will submit to the leadership authority of the sending

35. Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions, *Seven Standards*, 22.

entity, goer-guest leaders, and field facilitators; and who are capable of doing the task as designed.³⁶

Mutual design includes understanding the valuable perspectives of those in the field as well as those coming into it. Consider the following: An eager, well-meaning group of missionaries show up to do work without much input from the host receivers. They accomplish tasks the hosts do not need or want. They display a, “thank the Lord we are here to help you” attitude. They learn very little from the experience, because they entered the experience thinking they had little to learn and great things to contribute. This scenario not only makes for an unproductive mission, but also can ruin partnerships between goer-guests and receiving congregations. Worst of all, the mission fails to be God-centered.

Sadly, the mistakes mentioned above have been made by well-meaning goers. Disciples can sometimes forget that they are primarily learners: from God in his Word, from God’s work in the field they serve, and from the people in and through whom God has been working in that field.

The American mindset toward missions often pits product against process. The product might be discipleship development, or kingdom growth. Both are important. And the product will influence the process used. But not at the cost of the process. God does not care only about the product of a short-term mission. He also cares about the process. Who did the planning? How was the planning carried out? How was the on-site time utilized? What tasks were accomplished? How were the tasks accomplished? What was the attitude of the people serving, and being served? None of these can be disregarded for the sake of the product.

36. Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions, *Seven Standards*, 22.

How can STM leaders implement mutual design? They will want to build a relationship of trust and transparency between the goers and the host receivers. They will want to establish and manage the expectations of all involved. Expectations need to be gauged by the spiritual gifts and skills of the goers. Goers need insight into themselves as well as the people they will serve and with whom they will serve. Goers and hosts will want to plan with the long-term benefits of the receivers in mind. This might necessitate some face-to-face meetings prior to the STM. However, with modern technology that can be accomplished.

Will this careful planning eliminate all possibilities of misunderstanding? Will careful planning prevent service done poorly? Unfortunately, no. Mutual planning can head off many potential problems. For MLC students studying for ministry, mutual planning will provide many beneficial lessons.

Excellence Standard Four: Comprehensive Administration

An excellent short-term mission exhibits integrity through reliable set-up and thorough administration for all participants, and is expressed by:

- 4.1 Truthfulness in promotion, finances, and reporting results
- 4.2 Appropriate risk management
- 4.3 Quality program delivery and support logistics ³⁷

Standard #4 emphasizes a God-centered, God-honoring administrative structure for all short-term missions. As a college which sends many students into missions every year and wants to increase the number of participants, MLC will want to emphasize administration with integrity. What will this look like? According to the authors of Standard #4, “This includes (but is not limited to) our promotion, advertising, recruiting,

37. Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions, *Seven Standards*, 23.

screening, training, budgeting, financial reporting, arrangements and contracts made with outsourced suppliers on both the sending and receiving sides, and in post-field reporting of on-field results.”³⁸

The two areas most significant to the mission of Daylight and MLC are recruiting and screening. By making Daylight a requirement for every student’s ministry training, we limit our ability to screen students for the ministry experience most appropriate for them. When Daylight experiences were strictly voluntary, recruiters could target students for particular places where they would thrive. The recruiters, mainly the campus pastor and his assistant, knew the students well enough to guide them in their choices. Daylight leaders will have the double challenge of students applying for positions for which they are underprepared and Daylight recruiters who may not know students well enough to make best-fit recommendations.

I believe that Daylight leaders need to do all that they can to understand those they are sending. Daylight leaders will need to get to know students, ask appropriate questions, talk with students about their mission experiences, in general carry out due diligence on the students who want to participate. Daylight plans to implement background checks for those who will be working with children. After Daylight leaders have done all they can, they can confidently send those Jesus gives to send.

This standard also emphasizes the need to provide appropriate risk management and as much safety as possible for all participants, striving to minister Christ’s love boldly (Acts 1:8) and wisely.”³⁹ Daylight will want to establish a higher level of

38. Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions, *Seven Standards*, 23.

39. Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions, *Seven Standards*, 24.

intentionality when it comes to risk management. This may be a matter of clearer communication, since much of the risk management infrastructure is already in place.

Excellence Standard Five: Qualified Leadership

Standard #5 highlights the need for qualified leadership:

An excellent short-term mission screens, trains, and develops capable leadership for all participants, and is expressed by:

- 5.1 Character—Spiritually mature servant leadership
- 5.2 Skills—Prepared, competent, organized, and accountable leadership
- 5.3 Values—Empowering and equipping leadership ⁴⁰

By God's grace, the students who enroll at MLC represent some of the best young Christian men and women in our WELS congregations. But these students are unfinished disciples. Some are naïve about ministry and its demands. Some are immature, with a developing ability to take hold of the responsibilities God has given them.

Of course, this immaturity is one reason that MLC has initiated a program of STM experiences for students preparing for ministry. MLC believes that these experiences, in combination with faithful use of the Word, Spirit-filled worship, reflective classroom instruction, dormitory living, and even extra-curricular activities will develop servant-leaders who will be competent and qualified to lead our congregations and schools in the future.

Standard #5 highlights capable leadership as a prerequisite for mission service. The reason for such high standards might be the fact that leaders for most short-term missions are serving as chaperones for immature teens who need strict supervision in international fields.

40. Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions, *Seven Standards*, 25.

Daylight uses short-term missions to develop qualified leadership. Since each member of a Daylight team is training for church leadership, MLC wants to develop team members into qualified, capable leaders through their experience. Rather than one leader upon whom all team members rely, MLC will divide leadership responsibilities among the different team members. One might serve as an overall leader who is accountable for other members carrying out their tasks. One might serve as the leader for logistics, making sure everyone knows where to be and when. One might serve as the leader for communicating pictures and facts to senders, hosts, and others.

This team approach to leadership requires organization and cooperation among the team members. But it also equips these future church workers “to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.”⁴¹ This approach is not without potential problems, but Daylight believes it might accelerate the development of goers’ competence and spiritual maturity. Someone will need to hold students accountable, and be willing to fill in when others are unable to complete their tasks. That too is leadership development.

Excellence Standard Six: Appropriate Training

The standard that follows leadership is naturally the standard about training:

An excellent short-term mission prepares and equips all participants for the mutually designed outreach, and is expressed by:

- 6.1 Biblical, appropriate, and timely training
- 6.2 On-going training and equipping (pre-field, on-field, post-field)
- 6.3 Qualified trainers⁴²

41. Ephesians 4:12

42. Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions, *Seven Standards*, 26.

Thorough, biblical training is central to the mission of MLC: to prepare a corps of Christian witnesses for service to the church. Our primary tool is God's inspired, inerrant Word. That is also the Spirit's tool, which is why we want to use it faithfully. However, there is more to training than knowing the biblical basis for what we do and the right Bible passages to explain Jesus' message of salvation. These are the six primary training categories for goer-guests: "cross-cultural training, personal preparation, logistics training, intended activities preparation, financial preparation, and additional items unique to the given STM."⁴³

Logistics training, the how-to-travel details, varies from mission to mission. Instead of face-to-face, this training could probably be accomplished by putting the pertinent information on a website.

The training that will have the biggest impact on student performance and development is the training that gets to the heart of those who serve. Cross-cultural training helps goers see themselves in completely different settings, serving people who do not look or think like them, without placing value judgments on cultures that are different from their own. The gospel is cross-cultural. Kindness is cross-cultural. Students who serve for a week in a foreign culture, or simply a different culture, will not become experts on that new culture. But they can gain important insights if they understand their own culture and how it differs from the host culture. This training will emphasize discipleship—that goers want to be learners for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Lord grows healthy attitudes in such hearts.

43. Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions, *Seven Standards*, 27.

Personal spiritual preparation gets to the heart of the goers as well. Spiritual training invites the Sender to equip and empower his disciples for useful service to the glory of God. Goers, receivers, and senders cannot overestimate the power of the Holy Spirit in the gospel to soften hard hearts, to overcome personal fears, to help gifted people discover their gifts, and to give the peace of forgiveness to those who feel guilt for their failures as they stumble in service. Personal spiritual preparation can establish a healthy habit that may continue through years of ministry.

MLC has created a spiritual journal for each goer to utilize for pre-field, on-field, and post-field spiritual training. The journal encourages personal reflection and prayer on Bible verses that speak to their hearts about their individual experiences. We humbly ask God to bless his people through this important part of the STM process.

The delivery method for training goers provides some challenges. However, those can be surmounted—after all, the students are on campus. What can MLC do to train its host receivers? One of Daylight’s goals is to form partnerships with congregations for mission opportunities. The Standards of Excellence include training for host receivers. The categories are prudent:

Logistical support for goer-guests, program delivery for goer-guests, identifying our strategic field activities leveragable through goer-guests, blending our field-supplied leadership with their sending entity-supplied leadership, risk management and security issues for goer-guests, cross-cultural training, recruiting from goer-guests for field needs, outcomes follow-up, relational issues, reinforcing issues or concerns and other pre-field training during on-site orientation.⁴⁴

Materials made available to congregations online could cover most of these categories. To be effective, online instruction needs to be engaging and interactive, and

44. Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions, *Seven Standards*, 27.

that will take time that MLC and its partners may not have. Still, the opportunity for Daylight leaders to interact with congregation leaders promises many blessings.

The categories most beneficial to Daylight are those that help the host receivers better understand the students they will be receiving. Daylight must help congregations and schools understand that MLC students are not finished products: They are not graduates. They are not yet pastors or teachers. They are students who need guidance and encouragement. This mission is part of their education. The congregations who host our students are truly partners in preparing church workers. These host-receivers will likely give as much benefit as they receive—if they approach the mission properly. If they approach the mission thinking that the students are ready to lead without guidance and support, all parties involved will be frustrated. This is even more reason for MLC's Daylight to find effective ways to deliver training to our partners. Training demands will change as partnerships develop.

Excellence Standard Seven: Thorough Follow-Through

An important key to developing disciples through short-term missions is Bible-based follow-through. This is the focus of the final standard:

An excellent short-term mission assures evaluation, debriefing, appropriate follow-through for all participants, and is expressed by:

- 7.1 Comprehensive debriefing of all participants (pre-field, on-field, post-field)
- 7.2 Thoughtful and appropriate follow-through for goer-guests
- 7.3 On-field and post-field evaluation among sending and receiving partners⁴⁵

Picture the opening break shot in a game of billiards. After the billiard player racks the balls, he prepares with his cue to strike the rack and scatter the balls. He lines

45. Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions, *Seven Standards*, 28.

up and shoots. The cue ball strikes the balls, and the impact creates action. If struck correctly, the strike always has an impact on multiple billiard balls. Sometimes the strike is productive, putting balls in good position to be hit into nearby pockets. Sometimes the strike is less productive. But there is always an impact, and a follow-up to that impact. Sometimes it's making the best of a lousy angle. Sometimes it's following up an ideal break with a simple tap that puts the ball in the pocket.

A short-term mission has much in common with that opening break shot. Think of the impact of a good break. Think of the impact of a healthy experience. Goers influence each other as co-workers on a team. Goers influence hosts who receive them, and with whom they work. Goers influence intended receptors—children in a VBS classroom or neighbors who live near the church. And that's just a few examples. The impact between goers, hosts, and intended receptors will have results. But what will those results be? What makes them positive results? What could make the impact productive? What might make the impact unproductive?

The key to understanding impact, and what makes it productive, is reflective, Bible-based follow-through:

We acknowledge that thorough follow-through will help participants process the STM, apply lessons learned and promote continued personal growth (spiritual, emotional, intellectual, cross-cultural, relational, and other growth.) We also acknowledge that thorough follow-through can help participants integrate the entire STM into life for kingdom purposes, solidify transforming life change, and provide opportunity for continued personal commitment to Christ and the people of his world.⁴⁶

Follow-through is vital for MLC's Daylight program. Impact caused by the Word, by the work, by the teammates, by the intended receptors and hosts, will change students'

46. Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions, *Seven Standards*, 28.

attitudes. How will students manage that change? Through Bible-based debriefing, they will learn how God's work in their lives through this mission experience can help them and his Kingdom. They will learn how to build on the experience, using it as a springboard to further service and as motivation for ministry training. They will learn that the impact which seems negative or unproductive can in fact be productive as they learn more about themselves and how to use their God-given gifts.

Debriefing and follow-through is probably not a one-size-fits-all program. It could involve mentors, small-group Bible study, and prayer partners. A thorough follow-through program will equip students to tell their stories and to maintain contact with their hosts and receivers.

While follow-through may involve some triage, my experience is that few goers have been in need of such counsel. However, if triage can help one disciple learn from a negative experience, it will be worth it.

Another significant purpose for follow-through is evaluation of the Daylight program. Through debriefings with host congregations, Daylight can learn what it is doing well and what could be done better in preparing students for STM experiences. Debriefing also allows congregations to contribute to the development of future church workers by commenting on their attitudes, their gifts, and their strengths and weaknesses. Through debriefing and follow-through, students too will contribute to the development of the program and of each other as disciples of Jesus Christ.

The most effective follow-through will take place almost as soon as the goers return. Because face-to-face debriefings may not always be possible due to distance, using online tools for some of the follow-through might be advantageous.

From the literature, it seems that short-term missions became popular before their impact was clearly considered. My sense is that by the time the research and writing catch up, the wave of short-term missions will have crested and begun to recede. I believe the wave will rise again. Christians will realize the potential benefits and blessings inherent in short-term missions experiences. They will also realize that these experiences must be carried out wisely and thoughtfully. Solutions will be in place for the next wave to make short-term missions better. Organizations will have adjusted to the issues, built the infrastructure, and marshaled the resources to make mission experiences a blessing for goers, hosts, and receivers. It is my hope that this chapter contributes reflective insights to the growing base of knowledge about short-term mission experiences.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT DESIGN

Academic life on a college campus can be a grind. Learning a foreign language requires seat time that seems tedious. Learning about teaching, without actually doing it, can make the end goal of ministry seem far away. But an STM like the one discussed in this chapter can serve as a battery charger, a welcome glimpse of what students are preparing to do.

This chapter presents a case study of an MLC Daylight STM to Sure Foundation Lutheran Church in Queens, New York. Let's begin by reviewing the methodology of a case study.

The Case Study

A case study involves “conducting an empirical investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its natural context using multiple sources of information.”¹ A case study identifies the events that occur and the specific outcomes. It is an investigative process. The researcher enters the experience of the participants and through ongoing communication ascertains the participants' unique perspectives and understanding.

Case study research gathers information in ways far different from quantitative research. A case study takes the researcher into the field of inquiry, where natural behaviors occur. The data that emerges from a case study is descriptive. The reliability of the data depends on the insights and reflections of the participants—again, far different from the traditional methods of quantitative research.

1. Dawson R. Hancock and Bob Algozzine, *Doing Case Study Research: A Practical Guide for Beginning Researchers*, Second Edition (New York: Teachers College Press, 2011), 47.

In order to gain a suitable measure of verifiability, a case study will incorporate multiple methods of input and test some of the input by observation. In this case study, I triangulated the following sources of information: personal observation of the participants in action, a group interview with the participants, and personal reflection journals written by the participants during the time of their STM experience. As both researcher and team member, I also interviewed the lead pastor of the host congregation. Some pictures and videos were taken to document the team in action.

An extensive longitudinal study of feedback provided by MLC short-term mission participants could have been used to determine how STMs impact attitudes toward ministry. But it would have been difficult for such a study to verify that what the participants learned or felt was a result of their STM, and not other experiences. So a qualitative approach was initiated. The goal was to identify and connect what the students learned by experience with the actual experience.

The Researcher's Role

Since the researcher in a case study is involved in the data gathering, it is important to clarify any biases and personal interests that the researcher may bring. As campus pastor of the participants, one bias that could have crept in was a desire on my part to make things as easy or enjoyable as possible for the participants. After all, who wants his volunteers to have a negative experience? As director of the STM program on MLC's campus, Daylight USA, I did not want these students to come back and tell other students how undesirable this STM was.

I addressed this bias early in the process by resolving not to interfere with the congregation's plans for the MLC team. I offered no input on the types of activities the team would do, beyond sharing with the church leaders what gifts and experience this team had in the areas of outreach and worship. During the STM I simply followed the lead of the congregation, and let the events unfold organically, knowing that important lessons can be learned from both positive and negative experiences.

Another bias that could have crept in was the desire of the participants to please their pastor. Knowing that their pastor was present and counting on their input for his paper, would the student participants be willing to share unfiltered natural responses, or would they feel compelled to say or do only what they believed the campus pastor would want? We discussed this challenge during our pre-field Bible studies, and I assured them that all their insights were valuable. During pre-field preparation and during on-field discussions I reminded them I was not there to critique or judge them, or to determine the value of the STM by the results they had; I was there to record their insights and to provide validity to their comments about their experiences. We discussed the thought that a negative impression or experience was as valuable as a positive one. I assured them that the goal of the STM was service to the congregation according to its needs—not to obtain some preconceived notion of what they should experience or feel after their experience. I urged eager effort, wholehearted dedication, and honest reflection.

As campus pastor and director of the STM program at a ministerial education college, it is natural for me to want the experience to produce in participants' positive feelings about and attitudes toward ministry. How did I address this potential bias? As stated before, I had no input into the kind of ministry the team was asked to do. I was

Careful to encourage participants to draw their own conclusions about their STM and the ministry it revealed to them. In my daily contact with the team, I focused on listening with an open mind and asking open-ended questions about their experience.

There is no avoiding the potential for bias in a case study such as this. Being accompanied by the campus pastor did influence the students' experience. Knowing the focus of the case study was the impact of STM on attitudes toward the ministry probably influenced their thinking. My experience as a participant on past STMs influenced my views and expectations. Nevertheless, by triangulating the data, I believe the participants' reflections and experiences were not impacted in a way that would negate the lessons of this case study. I have shared with them the results of the group interview to check the validity of the insights identified. An external auditor, Dr. John Meyer, director of continuing education at MLC, has provided a positive assessment of the project.

The Setting

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) began in New York City. Perhaps it would be better to say that the Lutheran pastor who founded WELS got his ministry start in New York City. From 1838 to 1848 John Muehlhauser, a missionary from the Langenberger Mission Society in Germany, served in New York City and Rochester, New York. After not experiencing the success he had hoped for, he moved to Milwaukee and founded Grace Lutheran Church, which became the founding congregation of WELS.²

2. Glenn Rosenbaum, "Peace Lutheran Church: The Manhattan Project." Church History paper, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 1992. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary essay file, <http://hdl.handle.net/123456789/4028> (accessed June 21, 2016), 1.

Sad to say, WELS has made very few, and very unsuccessful, attempts at ministry in New York City. After decades of serving WELS people through congregations in neighboring New Jersey, WELS began a mission congregation, Peace Lutheran in Manhattan, in 1984. This mission was made up of a small core of committed Christians who opened their homes and volunteered their time to share the gospel. Unfortunately, this little congregation soon disbanded.³

By the mid 1990's, WELS again had no congregations in New York City. After careful consideration, the mission board of the North Atlantic district of WELS recommended starting a congregation within the five boroughs of New York City. Between the years 1997 and 2000 17 calls for missionaries were extended and declined. So the mission board of WELS asked for two seminary graduates to be assigned as mission pastors. In his perfect wisdom and love, the Lord of the Church sent Steve Gabb, Aaron Robinson, and their families to Queens. Beginning in July 2000, they met with and served alongside a small core of WELS Christians who were already meeting around the Word of God.⁴

After establishing an identity, Sure Foundation Lutheran Church (SFLC), and a focus, outreach to Hispanics in Queens through English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, they experienced the 9/11 attack on New York. SFLC joined New Yorkers in mourning the tragic loss of life. The congregation also seized an opportunity in the aftermath of the disaster to share the love of Jesus with financial assistance and gospel sharing.

3. Glenn Rosenbaum, "Peace Lutheran Church: The Manhattan Project," 3-4.

4. John Stelljes, "A Short History of Sure Foundation Lutheran Church." Church History paper, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 2005. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary essay file, <http://hdl.handle.net/123456789/3866> (accessed June 21, 2016), 4-7.

Eventually SFLC returned to its primary focus of reaching out through ESL. God blessed their efforts, leading to the purchase of a permanent storefront in the Woodside neighborhood of Queens.⁵ Today SFLC is a vibrant urban congregation offering worship and Bible study in English and Spanish. Two pastors and a vicar, a seminary student doing one year on-the-job training, serve SFLC.

What an exciting and diverse mission field in Queens, New York! Estimates are that Queens has approximately two million residents, or about 27 percent of New York City's eight million residents. It is the largest borough in terms of geographical area, and the second most populous, after Brooklyn. Almost one-half of Queens' residents are foreign born, and more than half speak a language other than English at home. In fact, it is estimated that more than 180 different languages are spoken in Queens. Some of the largest ethnic groups are Chinese, West Indian, Italian, Indian, and Irish.⁶

The Participants

When the two young pastors arrived in Queens for the first time, they wondered how they could make an impact in such a large city with so many people.⁷ I am quite certain the team of four students from MLC felt the same way. One student wrote, "Going out for a couple of hours showed me how vast the harvest field truly is. Outreach in the communities of Sure Foundation is uniquely diverse. I am simply one person."⁸ Swimming in a pool of people who looked nothing like them, surrounded by strange

5. John Stelljes, "A Short History of Sure Foundation Lutheran Church," 15-21.

6. Center for Urban Research, The Graduate Center, City University of New York (CUNY), "New York City Demographic Shifts, 2000-2010." Center for Urban Research, The Graduate Center, City University of New York (CUNY). <http://www.urbanresearchmaps.org/plurality/narrative.htm> (accessed June 21, 2016).

7. John Stelljes, "A Short History of Sure Foundation Lutheran Church," 5-6.

8. MLC student E16B, personal reflection journal, March 21, 2016.

sights and sounds, the students felt intimidated. The number and diversity of the people made them feel underprepared and overwhelmed. How could they make an impact with the gospel among so many people of so many cultures and languages? And yet, God sent them to Queens for his own good reasons.

In order to encourage honest feedback, the names of the participants have been withheld by mutual agreement. Each was assigned an alias in order to describe their background and experiences. These are the participants:

E16A is a fourth-year student in the teacher education program at MLC. She is studying for a double major in elementary and secondary education with an emphasis in Spanish. Her parents are not called gospel ministers, but are active lay members of a WELS congregation in South Attleboro, a suburb of Boston, Massachusetts. Her interest in the teaching ministry led her to attend a WELS preparatory high school in Wisconsin. She has served on two previous STMs. During the summer of 2014, she and E16B helped a congregation in Carlsbad, California, conduct its VBS. In high school, she helped a congregation with its soccer camp. She is an accomplished soccer player—a team leader on the MLC women’s soccer team, and a gifted guitarist.

E16B is a fourth-year student in the teacher education program at MLC. She is studying for a degree in elementary education. One of her parents was trained at Doctor Martin Luther College (the predecessor of MLC) and currently serves as a WELS teacher. E16B grew up in Wisconsin, where she attended Lutheran elementary and high schools. She has used her athletic gifts on the MLC women’s track team, and her musical aptitude as a valuable member of the MLC Chorale, a college choir of mixed voices.

E16C is a traditional first-year in the preseminary program at MLC. He attended public high school in northeastern Wisconsin, and comes from a long line of gospel ministers. His father is a WELS pastor, and his mother was trained to be a teacher at DMLC. A number of his siblings are in, or are training for, gospel ministry; in fact, his brother is the vicar at SFLC. Family interest has had a big impact on his attitude toward ministry. He employs his musical interest in the MLC men's choir, and his athletic gifts on the MLC football team.

E16D is a traditional first-year in the preseminary program at MLC. He attended Lutheran elementary and high schools near his home in Madison, Wisconsin. Neither of his parents is a church worker, but both are active in their local congregation. His great uncle's service as a WELS pastor has influenced his desire to prepare for the pastoral ministry. He too uses his musical gifts in the men's choir, and his soccer skills on the MLC men's soccer team.⁹

All four of these students volunteered to serve SFLC during their Holy Week break from MLC. They also agreed to share their insights and reflections with me as part of my thesis-project. They were not paid for this week of work; in fact, they raised two hundred dollars each to help cover their travel costs. And they paid from their own pocket for meals that the church did not provide.

The Events of the Short-Term Mission

Holy Week is an important week in the life of most Christian congregations, and SFLC is no different. For the past five years MLC has sent a team of four students to help

9. John Boeder, "Focus Group," Transcription of Audio Recording, March 28, 2016.

SFLC with outreach and worship during Holy Week. The positive impact of this STM is one of the primary reasons for conducting this thesis-project at SFLC. Another reason is the significance of the week for the ministry of SFLC. SFLC benefits from the extra help to invite the neighborhood to hear the good news of Easter. A third reason is the continuing need to expose future church workers to the diversity and culture of a healthy urban congregation like SFLC.

We arrived on Monday, March 21, and departed in the early morning of Monday, March 28. Vicar Paul was placed in charge of the MLC team for the week, and he scheduled time to see some of the sights of New York along with time for ministry. He also led a devotional Bible study at the start of each day.

Following these devotions we discussed our plans for the day and hit the streets of Queens. SFLC initiated a fun competition among the canvassers: Points were awarded for each piece of information collected from neighbors of SFLC. The goal was that SFLC members and leaders could follow up on those who were interested in learning more about the message and ministry. If people were unwilling to share, or were not home, the canvassers left a colorful invitation to SFLC's Easter worship and a fun activity called Easter in the Park.

Between the four team members who canvassed full-time, Vicar Paul, and I, who canvassed part-time, nearly five thousand invitations were distributed in the SFLC neighborhood. In addition to canvassing, the team spent time each day planning for the Art in the Park event that was held on Saturday. They planned the activities, divided duties, prepared their part of the event, and carried it out. They were the entire show. The pastors and vicar wisely spent their time in the park on Saturday, meeting the parents and

grandparents of the children, collecting information for follow-up, and inviting them to Easter worship.

Team members also prepared daily to use their gifts in the Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter worship services. Team MLC and I sang special music in the Maundy Thursday and Good Friday worship services. We even sang in Spanish, a language with which not all of us were familiar. On Easter Sunday, the women on our team sang and played guitar during Easter worship.

A few other tasks were accomplished during the week. On Monday night Team MLC, the pastors, and some church members made phone calls to encourage members and prospects to attend Easter worship. A brief effort was made to connect with people at the local subway station, but that proved to be unsuccessful, so was abandoned.

Besides accomplishing congregational tasks, the most impactful event for the team might have been learning how to get around in a crowded, busy, multicultural city. Living in small Midwestern cities, none of us had experience navigating public transportation like the New York City train system. We had no access to a vehicle during the week, so if we wanted to see the city, we had to learn the train system.

Team members also learned some of the differences of congregational life in an urban church. Iron gates protected the church, and were pulled open in the morning to allow people in. The church was not a beehive of activity during the week. Members of SFLC were at work during the day, or lived far away from the church. Little interaction took place between Team MLC and church members until Easter Sunday.

Thankfully, SFLC did allow time to see the city. Wednesday was a free day, and the team took the opportunity to visit Ellis Island, the Statue of Liberty, and the 9/11

Museum, and take in a Broadway musical, *Phantom of the Opera*. Sightseeing was more than a way to see the city and take a break from work. It was an opportunity to learn about a unique place and its culture.

Data Collection Strategies

I feel very fortunate to have spent my week with the MLC team at SFLC. My main role was to collect data in the natural setting of the mission. Some of my time was spent canvassing and distributing invitations, but most of my time was spent observing the short-term mission and the team in action—while canvassing and during the Easter in the Park event.

Most resources on qualitative research emphasize the need to triangulate sources of information to check the accuracy of the findings. In addition to my observations, I interviewed the group after our mission was completed. We met in my office on the Monday we returned. A series of open-ended questions prompted their reflections on what they learned about themselves and the ministry from the STM experience.

The students provided a third source of data in the form of personal reflection journals. Each student received a journal prior to the mission, and was asked to answer three basic questions every day: What did I do today? What did I learn about myself? What did I learn about ministry?

In addition to these sources of data, I documented the mission with pictures and a few videos of the team singing in worship.

Data Analysis Procedures

Throughout the data analysis process, researchers typically index or code their data using as many categories as possible. They seek to “identify and describe patterns and themes from the perspective of the participants, then attempt to understand and explain these patterns and themes.”¹⁰

During data analysis, I organized the three main sources of data categorically, rather than chronologically. After repeatedly reviewing the resources, and using different colored highlighters to categorize similar themes, I have chronicled a list of major themes that surfaced in the data. This was possible because all of the data have been transcribed: the group interview, the personal journals, and the observations.

Ethical Considerations

Every researcher has an obligation to respect the rights, needs, values, and desires of the participants. This is especially true for a case study, since the researcher is able to invade the lives of the participants during the event and afterwards through the data analysis process.¹¹ Therefore, it was important for me to describe the research objectives to the student participants and pastor Tim as a representative of SFLC. This information was shared with SFLC in written form and with the MLC team both verbally and in written form. Each student signed an Informed Consent Document indicating that they understood the purpose of the research study, the procedures which would be employed, the risks to them personally (very few in this case), the benefits, the compensation (none),

10. John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2003), 203.

11. John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches*, 202.

and the statement of confidentiality. In order to protect their anonymity and their freedom to express all insights and reflections, each student was given an alias. Personal information about them has been limited.

Because the data was collected from human participants, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (GCTS) required that I completed a, “Review of Protections of Human Participants.” This report clarified the process for maintaining anonymity and confidentiality for the participants of the case study. Records of participation will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. Identification numbers were assigned to student participants. Participant journals, my observations, and all focus group data will be kept confidential. Only I have access to the stored data. Results of the data will be reported in a summarized manner so that participants cannot be identified.

Looking back, some of these steps to protect confidentiality seem a bit excessive. It turns out that no one experienced anything that hurt or harmed them in any way. No one revealed information that might harm someone’s confidence in their ability to serve in public ministry. Nevertheless, I believe that these steps gave the participants an extra sense of freedom to reveal their true feelings.

Verification

Many strategies were employed to ensure the internal and external validity of the data. To ensure internal validity, data has been triangulated between interviews, observations, and personal journals. The participants have also been involved in a review of the research findings. Throughout the case study, there has been an ongoing dialogue with the participants; we discussed what I was hearing from them, and if my

understanding reflected their feelings. Personal observations of the field and the team in action validated that their reflections were based on their experiences. My own potential biases were discussed in the section of this paper entitled “The Researcher’s Role.”

The primary strategy to ensure external validity was writing a detailed description of the field being served, the participants serving, the type of service involved, and the unique focus of MLC. This description will provide important background information for anyone who would want to generalize this data. In reality, a case study such as this one will not be generalizable beyond the walls of MLC, since our unique purpose and focus on ministerial education influences who participates and the filters through which they see this experience.

Preparation

Team MLC served SFLC in Queens, New York, from March 21-28, 2016. However, the STM did not begin with the flight to New York on March 21. The team spent the month before departure preparing with Bible study and prayer, utilizing the *Short-Term Missions Handbook* written by Tim Dearborn.

Student E16A appreciated the studies:

Before our mission trip, we spent every Tuesday and Wednesday for a month going through a short-term mission workbook that prepared us for our trip to New York. This included Bible readings and questions that intended us to understand what to expect...for our time doing mission work. It also helped connect us to the Word and reminded us to keep Christ at the forefront of our trip.¹²

12. MLC student E16A, personal reflection journal, March 21, 2016.

All of the student participants were prompted to answer the question, “What did I learn about myself?” in their journals. Thanks to the Bible study’s focus on service to the Savior, each gained valuable insight regarding ministry gifts prior to the actual on-field work. E16A wrote, “As I met with the rest of the group I would be traveling with, I learned that my gifts were mostly different than those of the other members of our group. God will be using me in a different way than my other team members. I also learned that God is able to use me in ways I never knew.”¹³

Another wrote, “These past sessions definitely enlightened my perceptions of myself in the gospel ministry. I know that God has blessed others with gifts that I am weak in, thus I can honor the work of the church with the gifts that I do possess. It’s sometimes difficult to acknowledge our faults and shortcomings, but this leads me to trust in Christ’s work.”¹⁴

One male participant wrote, “I learned that ministry will not be easy by myself, but with the help of God I will be okay. God is always with us in ministry, anything is possible.”¹⁵

All of the students took notice of the important role of teamwork and relationships, as expressed in this reflection from E16D: “I learned that working in a group is very useful, and teamwork is extremely important for ministry.”¹⁶

One student saw the value of relationships not only for the team, but also for the work of sharing the gospel: “How can the saving message be proclaimed truthfully

13. MLC student E16A, personal reflection journal, March 21, 2016.

14. MLC student E16B, personal reflection journal, March 21, 2016.

15. MLC student E16C, personal reflection journal, March 21, 2016.

16. MLC student E16D, personal reflection journal, March 21, 2016.

without first establishing a relationship with the person....I want to tell all people of the best relationship-the one between them and God.”¹⁷

Monday, March 21, 2016

Travel day is always exciting, and a heightened attention to security can make it even more so. Fortunately, our travel to Queens, New York was quite uneventful. When we arrived safely at LaGuardia Airport in the late morning, we did notice an increase in security. Police were all around, and on alert. A heightened police presence was also noticeable whenever we took the subway in Queens, at least for the first few days of the STM. Terrorist attacks in Brussels, Belgium, had set New York on edge. After suffering the devastation of 9/11, who can blame New Yorkers for taking safety seriously? For those of us from small towns in the Midwest, where most people don't lock their doors at night, this was the beginning of many new experiences we would encounter.

We grabbed a quick lunch at a local Queens eatery. Here was another notable experience for Team MLC. We were treated like special guests. People moved to make room for our little group, though we were the only people who spoke English as our first language. With a little help from the Spanish speaker in our group, we were able to order and enjoy a delicious lunch.

After lunch, Pastor Tim led an orientation session for the short-term missionaries from MLC. He explained why ministry to and in the city is so important. Over eight million souls inhabit New York City, more than the population of several Midwestern states. The city is a great harvest field. Queens is among the most diverse places in the

17. MLC student E16B, personal reflection journal, March 21, 2016.

world. More than 180 different languages are spoken in Queens. In the church neighborhood, we found Filipinos, Bangladeshis, Hispanics, and Latinos from all over the world. What a great place for our small church body to do outreach!

As previously mentioned in this essay, WELS has not had a great history in New York City. The founders of WELS began their ministry there, but were unable to plant a church in New York, so they migrated to Milwaukee. After attempting to serve New Yorkers through the efforts of nearby congregations, WELS made a couple of unsuccessful attempts at starting congregations: Peace Lutheran Church was started and served by WELS pastor Glen Thompson back in the 1980s. A few members of this church still attend Sure Foundation from time to time. A WELS mission started in Brooklyn in the 1990s did not last long either. Today by God's grace, Sure Foundation recently celebrated its 15th anniversary. It appears that, humanly speaking, this congregation has become a stronghold for confessional Lutheranism in New York City. WELS has wisely supported this mission well.

Shortly after this orientation from Pastor Tim, Vicar Paul prepared us for canvassing in the church neighborhood. Sometimes the best preparation for canvassing is canvassing—and prayer. As E16B wrote, “Canvassing is intimidating only if you make it intimidating. I made it intimidating for myself the first couple of houses. Thus I learned that you just have to do it to feel more confident in doing it.”¹⁸

She clarified the team's assignment this way: “I paired up with [E16A] and we went and knocked on doors as a pair. Our job for canvassing was to hand out the Easter fliers and invite the person to church. If it was possible we were to obtain contact

18. MLC student E16B, personal reflection journal, March 21, 2016.

information about the individual, so he or she could become a possible prospect for the church.”¹⁹

Vicar Paul and I canvassed as a team. In Queens, the houses are tightly packed together. Some are actually touching each other, making it easy to visit homes quite efficiently. Most of the homes we canvassed were multifamily dwellings. It was quite normal to see four doorbells at each front door, meaning four families lived in four different apartments in each home. Vicar and I often rang all the bells, and occasionally more than one person would answer. Most of the people we met in this neighborhood of the church were white, though probably not native English speakers.

Team MLC distributed fliers for Easter worship at SFLC and an Easter in the Park event on the Saturday before Easter. Vicar and I each found one interested party on our first canvass. We had many short, friendly conversations, but very few people showed interest in Easter worship.

We were not the only team of two that struggled to meet interested people on that first day. E16A reflected, “I always have gotten nervous when I have to canvass or call people, but I need to understand that one failure is not worth getting upset about. I cannot blame myself for not succeeding, but I must try different approaches.”²⁰

E16C responded to the lack of interest in a similar way: “I also learned that there are so many different types of people out there that I am not familiar with. This is great training for me. I learned that people in this world aren’t always happy to hear about God. This was tough for me to realize until now.”²¹

19. MLC student E16B, personal reflection journal, March 21, 2016.

20. MLC student E16A, personal reflection journal, March 21, 2016.

21. MLC student E16C, personal reflection journal, March 21, 2016.

Though the rejection was a wake-up call for Team MLC, the participants responded with faith and faithfulness:

Going out for a couple hours this day showed me how vast the harvest field truly is. Outreach in the communities of Sure Foundation is uniquely diverse. I am simply one person, one worker, one harvester for the gospel amongst the acres and acres of fields. Yet it is amazing how the ministry and message of one can benefit the overall ministry and message of God.²²

After supper we cold-called “hot prospects” of SFLC who spoke English. Pastor Tim and the Spanish-speaking member of our team called prospects who spoke Spanish. We called a few “cold prospects” as well. A number of the “hot prospects” indicated that they intended to attend Easter worship.

After these calls, Team MLC went home with their host families and I went to a local hotel. It was a long, but exciting, first day. It appeared to me that Sure Foundation has an ideal location. It is easily accessible by train and there are thousands of people in the church neighborhood, making for a vast mission field. On our canvass of the church neighborhood I met a Buddhist woman, a Muslim woman, and a number of parishioners from the local Roman Catholic Church, Saint Sebastian’s. This church casts a sizable footprint in the area with its large worship facility, elementary school, and an American Legion Post nearby.

Tuesday, March 22, 2016

Vicar Paul led a Bible study of 1 Peter. He encouraged us to read 1 Peter 1:1-12 and meditate on it using a method used by Luther: What is God saying? What does this

22. MLC student E16B, personal reflection journal, March 21, 2016.

cause me to confess? Give thanks for? Pray about? We gave thanks that the truths of salvation revealed in 1 Peter 1 are so valuable that angels long to look into them.

After Bible study, I observed the team of women as they canvassed during the morning. They went to each door as a team. One would speak if there was someone to speak to. The other would place the invitation in a conspicuous place on or near the door.

The homes they visited were row houses, many of brick. Most had iron doors, iron bars around the windows, and iron gates around the front door area. Though the neighborhood seemed safe, especially in the morning, the amount of metal used to protect these homes left the impression that the homeowners were concerned about safety.

The homes in the neighborhood were well maintained. Many contained multiple families living in different apartments within the home. The neighborhood bordered a large Roman Catholic church, Saint Sebastian's. Many of those who were not interested in the invitation from SFLC indicated that Saint Sebastian's was serving them.

In the hour between 10:30 and 11:30 a.m., the canvassers visited two sides of two different streets. Of the 42 homes they visited, 30 had no one home, 10 were not interested, and two were interested and accepted the Easter invitation. No one gave any contact information to the canvassers.

Considering the response the canvassers received, they remained remarkably enthusiastic. They consistently gave a brief, friendly greeting at the door. They did not give the appearance of being discouraged, except perhaps by the knowledge that some who were unchurched showed little interest in their Easter invitation.

It was clear from the homes displaying Catholic decorations that this was the parish area served by Saint Sebastian's. The team met very few white people. The women

that were home appeared predominantly Asian, and were not interested. Two men who were driving on the street stopped and asked what the canvassers were doing. English seemed to be a second language for virtually everyone we met.

To warm up, the team took a brief detour into Saint Sebastian's Church. The modest brick exterior belied a large and beautiful sanctuary within—large enough to seat perhaps a thousand worshippers. Because it was Holy Week, a line of 30 parishioners waited to enter the confessionals in the back of the church. Others were praying the Stations of the Cross which covered the side walls of the sanctuary. The large rotunda was beautiful and transcendent. We learned from a brief history of the church that Saint Sebastian's had been planted in an Irish neighborhood that had since become Asian and Hispanic. The church seemed to be serving its neighbors.

The lack of interest demonstrated by the people being canvassed did affect the young women, though they did not let it dampen their enthusiasm. E16A wrote of the experience, "I can be very easily discouraged. After a day full of canvassing, I was worn out. I didn't like it when people closed the door on us as soon as we said church. It made me sad when people didn't want to come to church. No one was mean to us, but this day of canvassing made me dread a little the next day we would canvass."²³

E16B felt the same: "During canvassing I was fairly optimistic for success, but success is not always seen directly by my own doing," she wrote. "I learned that the ministry is full of things you need to do although you might not want to. It's not all happy moments or easy moments, but it is really hard sometimes."²⁴

23. MLC student E16A, personal reflection journal, March 22, 2016.

24. MLC student E16B, personal reflection journal, March 22, 2016.

What a difference a little success makes in the mindset of the participants.

Compare the disappointed comments of the young women with the comments of the young men who canvassed in a nearby neighborhood at the same time. Notice how just a bit of interest made their canvassing seem rewarding: “I learned that ministry is something that is really special,” wrote E16C. “[E16D] and I had the chance to talk to a man who seemed pretty interested in the church. This was nice because it shows that spreading God’s Word does have some impact on people’s lives.”²⁵

His partner had similar positive comments: “I learned today that I really like talking to people, especially people different than I am. I enjoy my personal time, but I thoroughly enjoy talking and meeting new people.”²⁶

The difference generated by just a few positive interactions says much about the effectiveness of canvassing and the need to keep being encouraged—if not by positive results, then by remembering the motivation—to spread the gospel message out of love for the Savior Jesus. It was difficult for me as pastor of the women to remain the observer and allow them to encourage each other. It was gratifying to see that they did.

E16B articulated a truth about canvassing that all congregations would do well to keep in mind,

The probability of outreach depends on the time of day and location. Today we canvassed in a neighborhood close to a Catholic church. Some people were polite and listened to our invitation, but then responded that they already belong to a church. Also earlier in the morning, most of the homes and apartments were vacant because people were already at work. Others still were unable to chat with us because they were going out the door as we approached them. We found more success during the late afternoon hours rather than morning sessions.²⁷

25. MLC student E16C, personal reflection journal, March 22, 2016.

26. MLC student E16D, personal reflection journal, March 22, 2016.

27. MLC student E16B, personal reflection journal, March 22, 2016.

After lunch, Team MLC learned songs for Maundy Thursday and Good Friday worship services. The Spanish speaker from the team translated the English words of one song into Spanish and wrote them into the song so that we could sing the same song in the English and Spanish worship services on Good Friday.

Vicar Paul led a planning meeting for the Easter in the Park. Being new to SFLC's neighborhood, we walked to the park to check it out. Hart Park is a typical city park, with lots of concrete and playground equipment. With favorable weather on Saturday, SFLC should be able to reach many children and their caregivers at the event. Sure Foundation did limited promotion for the event since children will go to that park on a Saturday whether SFLC is there or not. Much planning for the event was still needed, but eager hands filled 150 eggs and cleaned as many books. These will be given away.

Team MLC went back to canvassing from 4:00 to 5:15 p.m., Vicar Paul and I leapfrogged down a few streets. Vicar discovered a few interested people and I found one. We both agreed that Saint Sebastian's cast a large shadow in the neighborhoods we were canvassing.

At 5:30 p.m., we tried subway evangelism. It did not go well, partly because neither Vicar nor Team MLC understood how to connect with the people getting off the trains. After ten minutes of trying, we gave up and went back to SFLC. There were still many fliers to hand out.

That evening Team MLC went to Times Square. Our guides were Vicar Paul and Maggie, a member of Sure Foundation. We ate at John's Pizza, a former church converted into a pizzeria, which enjoys an amazing location in the heart of Broadway. Then we walked to Rockefeller Plaza, Bryant Park, and Grand Central Station.

Wednesday, March 23, 2016

Wednesday was our free day to explore Ellis Island, the Statue of Liberty, and the 9/11 Memorial. Team MLC got an early start, but ended up taking the long way to the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. The subway route we chose took two precious hours, but we eventually got on the correct trains and arrived at Ellis Island. The museum there describes the immigrant experience for millions of people coming to America. Individual exhibits explain how immigrants came to become citizens, and the care they received along the way. Only one-third of the immigrants passing through Ellis Island remained in New York City. The rest scattered across the United States.

The ferry ride out to the Statue of Liberty was quite cold. Still, we noticed many tourists taking selfies with the statue that symbolizes the hope and freedom that America offers and for which it stands.

The 9/11 Memorial Museum left a lasting impression on our day and our hearts. Two memorials make up most of the plaza in front of the museum. The endless water pools etched with names of the victims impress on visitors the tragic loss of life and the love the city feels for its own. The 9/11 Museum both humbles and inspires. The attention to detail, the thoughtful presentation of the tragedy, and the moving exhibits throughout make an indelible impression and remind us of the importance of protecting American citizens from terrorism.

After the museum, we took a chance and went to Times Square with hopes of getting tickets to a musical. We waited in line and procured tickets to *Phantom of the Opera*. We enjoyed tremendous seats in the second mezzanine. Though we were in the last row, the chandelier and Phantom were at times eye level with our seats. Restrooms in

this venerable theater were in disrepair, but the Broadway cast and crew made the performance a uniquely memorable experience, yet not looking like they were just going through the motions.

With so much to do to reach out to the people of SFLC's neighborhood, why did the church give us a day off to sightsee? E16B expressed it this way:

It's breathtaking to marvel at all its complexities - people, food, buildings, and more...I must have passed thousands of people, thousands of souls who need to hear the gospel news. How can I resist that field of individuals? To sum up this day of touring: to know and connect with people, you have to know and connect with the same experiences that they experience. You have to immerse yourself into [sic] their world. And the world of New York has endless...things to experience.²⁸

Seeing the important and exciting things the city offers helped us get a sense of the place and the challenge of ministry in New York City. The city attracts the independent, the highly talented, and those who are excellent at what they do. This can inspire excellence in a church, or intimidate a church. Out of love for our Savior and the people he loves, it seems to me that our church in New York City will want to continue to strive for excellence. The people of New York City are more likely to take note of excellence than mediocre efforts.

WELS is currently blessed with a robust ministry to the people of Queens, some of whom are quite poor. WELS has provided money and manpower to support such a ministry. Praise God for what he has allowed us to accomplish in Queens. What about the wealthy residents of Manhattan or the Bronx? As E16A observed, "The people in cities are vastly diverse, and they need someone to tell them the good news."²⁹

28. MLC student E16B, personal reflection journal, March 23, 2016.

29. MLC student E16A, personal reflection journal, March 23, 2016.

Maundy Thursday, March 24, 2016

Team MLC met for Bible study at 10:00 a.m. with Vicar Paul. We read 1 Peter 3, which emphasized the power of water and the Word to save through the Sacrament of Baptism. What a great reminder before canvassing: Not only did God save us because of his grace alone, but he longs to share that grace with the people of Queens. Our motivation for door-to-door canvassing is God's grace. Our message is the same.

I conducted my second observation of the student participants, observing the young men on Thursday. To avoid interfering with the canvassers, I observed from a distance as they went door-to-door. Since the canvassers went on opposite sides of the same street, I followed E16C from 10:45 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. and E16D from 11:45 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

According to Pastor Tim, the chances of someone coming to Easter services because of an invitation left on their door were minimal. Therefore, the canvassers tried to get contact information instead of simply leaving the invitation in a conspicuous place on or near the door.

SFLC is located near the corner of 65th and Roosevelt in Queens. The canvassers visited homes on 60th and 37th streets. As with the women's team, the homes they visited were brick row houses that were well maintained. Almost all contained multiple families living in different apartments within the home. The canvassers rang three or four different doorbells at the same time and waited to see who would respond. For most of the people in the neighborhood, it seemed that English was not the first language. There was a mix of Hispanic and Asian nationalities.

Of the 41 homes E16C visited, 27 had no one home, 12 were not interested, and two were interested and received the church invitation. One young Hispanic woman responded with mild interest to the question, “Would you be interested in receiving more information about the church?” She said, “Maybe.” The canvasser eagerly encouraged the Hispanic woman to write out her contact information. He also invited her and her family to Easter in the Park on Saturday and Easter Sunday worship.

One young man also expressed interest in receiving more information from the church. Unfortunately, when E16C gave him the contact information sheet, he changed his mind and offered no information. This change of mind had a big impact on the canvasser, who questioned himself over how he responded to the young man’s initial positive reaction.

After we warmed ourselves in a local business, I observed the other student, E16D. We were quite surprised to find that we were in a Muslim neighborhood, with many of the neighbors of Arabic descent. Of the 20 homes he visited, 12 were not home, five were not interested, and two were interested enough to receive the fliers from him as they walked down the street.

Scattered among the multifamily homes of this neighborhood were a number of small storefront Christian churches. We visited a small church of Jewish converts to Christianity, but no one was around. There was a small Pentecostal church worshipping in Spanish at noon. There were two Korean churches. One was a Korean Presbyterian church that had a small English congregation with 40 and a large Korean congregation of two hundred. The English-speaking pastor turned out to be a friend of my GCTS classmate who serves in New York.

The two MLC teams met at about 12:30 p.m., and walked back to church for lunch. The team of young women had had a successful morning canvass, gathering contact information from four different people. E16B described it in her journal:

About halfway through I came to this house, knocked, and waited. The conversation was wonderful with this Indian woman. She was semi-interested and I took a jump and posed more questions. She replied by saying, “I will talk this over with my husband.” So I naturally thanked her for talking and slyly asked for her name in order to properly thank her. She pronounced her name, but it was difficult to catch (and even spell correctly). So I asked her to actually write down her name, and if she felt obliged to write down other information on the card. The Lord’s work is always good! After I left the stoop, my partner eyed me from across the street and I gave her the largest smile and an eager thumbs up.³⁰

Considering the negative responses, the cool temperatures, and the chaotic sounds and sights of the city, the team of young men were remarkably persistent. They consistently gave a brief, friendly greeting at the door. They did become somewhat discouraged, especially E16C, who blamed himself for the young man changing his mind on giving contact information to the church. The canvasser felt he should have listened more. Only God knows why the young man changed his mind, but the exchange left a lasting impact on our canvasser.

How can the difficulties of canvassing serve as preparation for ministry?

E16A reflected:

Just how I said that I can be easily disappointed, I also can be easily uplifted. Getting a few contacts today got me very excited to spread the good news. However, I need to work on maintaining this joy and excitement instead of having ups and downs. I need to remember to be positive about the good things instead of focusing on the bad. In ministry, it’s not up to you if someone comes to faith. You are only the instrument that communicates the message. When people reject the gospel, don’t blame yourself or God. It is not your plan, but God’s. If things go well or things go poorly, give thanks and praise to Him.³¹

30. MLC student E16B, personal reflection journal, March 24, 2016.

31. MLC student E16A, personal reflection journal, March 24, 2016.

During the afternoon, Team MLC planned Easter in the Park. They decided that there would be four stations—a station for sidewalk chalk, two craft tables, and a station for storytelling. They will wrap up park planning and preparation on Friday.

The process of planning produced some valuable insights on teamwork. E16C wrote, “I learned that I need to always strive to be a better team worker. I think sometimes I feel like I need to be a leader when it is not my time to be one. This is something I need to try harder at. I learned that ministry is a team activity. Everyone needs to do their part when it comes to spreading God’s Word.”³²

After planning, the students went canvassing for one hour and did not receive any positive contacts. They were not discouraged. Instead, they reflected on the value of canvassing the area around church and the canvassing approach. They expressed frustration at times that neighbors claimed not to understand them so they would not have to talk to them. They wondered if their time could be better spent in a different way or in a different neighborhood. They concluded that even though door-to-door canvassing did not seem to be effective in meeting interested people, it still seemed like the best way to get new contacts in the neighborhood. They trusted the wisdom and planning of the host congregation, SFLC. After all, the students were new to ministry and canvassing in New York City, and were adjusting their expectations to the reality of door-to-door work in Queens—it is not easy. Many families may be attracted to churches that speak their native language. SFLC, though serving a multicultural congregation, still has the feel of an English-speaking congregation. There are many people to serve in Queens, but the cost to be there is prohibitive. There are no easy answers, but God blesses faithful efforts.

32. MLC student E16C, personal reflection journal, March 24, 2016.

In the late afternoon, Team MLC spent significant time working on music for Maundy Thursday worship services. It was hard to feel prepared since the pianist arrived at 5:15 PM., and English language worship service started at 6 PM. The singing of Psalms 116 and 89 went fairly well, though we made a few mistakes. Vicar Paul's sermon was very engaging and encouraging. He reminded us of the gift of forgiveness given in the Lord's Supper.

Sadly, only a few Spanish speakers came for the Spanish language Maundy Thursday worship, so the service was shortened. After Pastor Dan gave a short sermon, communion was served.

Good Friday, March 25, 2016

Good Friday began with a Bible study on 1 Peter 4. Vicar Paul encouraged us to serve God with our gifts and to his glory. Good Friday makes that service to God ever more meaningful.

After Bible study Vicar Paul urged Team MLC to distribute all the fliers for Easter Sunday. He felt that SFLC members would like to see all the fliers distributed in the neighborhoods and not left unused. Instead of observing, I canvassed with the team of young women. We walked a few blocks to 53rd and Stillman, which was mostly apartments and multifamily homes. We distributed hundreds of fliers by putting them in the doorways of apartment houses. Most of these apartment buildings had thirty or more units and housed hundreds of people of all different nationalities. We noted that there were few churches in the area except for Saint Sebastian's, and that many of the surnames on the mailboxes of the apartments we canvassed were Hispanic.

E16 B summed up the canvassing experience: “Ministry is not always glamorous. It can be long days of work at a church, school or community. No work of outreach is futile—God works in all things. Knowing this plainly encourages me to wake up each day ready to serve God in all my words and actions.”³³

The time seemed to fly because we were able to interact with a good number of people who were out. We personally invited many neighbors to Easter worship and Easter in the Park. The response was mainly positive, though it is easier to say yes than to follow up with action. E16B described the experience:

The area that I walked contained numerous and very large apartments and complexes. The day was also kind of hot and muggy, but that did not discourage me from the task set before us. While we were walking down one street a gentleman was sitting at his stoop. I greeted him and invited him to Sure Foundation’s Easter services. He was very interested in the flier and after we walked back down the street he again complimented us on the flier.³⁴

After lunch, the Team needed a break and time to prepare for Easter in the Park. The team learned positive lessons from planning for this event. “I had noticed that we were a little tired after a long, hot morning of canvassing,” wrote E16B in her journal. “I encouraged and kind of headed up dealing out jobs and duties to be accomplished. The others respected me and I also respected and trusted them in their jobs. I love achieving goals and tasks and I know God will use these gifts and abilities for his will.”³⁵ Such self-discovery certainly benefitted the kingdom work of this young woman at SFLC and will help her in the future.

While I was enjoying a canvassing excursion on my own, Team MLC prepared for Easter in the Park. Before I left, we spent some time coaching the young man who

33. MLC student E16B, personal reflection journal, March 25, 2016.

34. MLC student E16B, personal reflection journal, March 25, 2016.

35. MLC student E16B, personal reflection journal, March 25, 2016.

would be telling the Easter story. Though he knew the story, he had never told it in front of a group of children. We worked on how to engage children, using methods I have taught in theology courses at MLC. The girls prepped crafts and bought cannoli from a local bakery.

I grabbed the last one hundred or so fliers and distributed them near the park where Art in the Park would be held. I was able to personally invite a few mothers and children who were near the park. Many seemed interested. The success I enjoyed in just a few hours of talking to people near the park demonstrated that this was probably a missed opportunity. Last minute preparations for Easter in the Park left too little time to make a special effort to invite neighbors who lived near the park to the special Saturday morning event. A team of four could have contacted many neighbors. The reality is that there is much work to do in Queens. Perhaps Sure Foundation could host a larger team from MLC to help with Easter outreach.

There were two Good Friday services, one in English and one in Spanish. Team MLC sang the Reproaches as cantors for both services. It was quite a challenge for those of us with no Spanish language training to sing in Spanish—especially since one of our students re-wrote the music to accommodate the correct words. Our efforts were certainly appreciated by the members of SFLC.

Sure Foundation followed the Tridium order of service, meaning that Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter were all part of a three-part service. Worshippers left Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services in silence, and without the blessing. The Good Friday service lasted more than an hour, causing the Spanish service to start late. The services focused on the saving sacrifice of Jesus on the first Good Friday and moved

worshippers to grateful praise. Pastor Tim is a talented worship leader and cantor, both in English and Spanish. Pastor Dan had a fine sermon. The Reproaches we sang were poignant and humbling, important thoughts for Good Friday. The English service was filled to overflowing, with many arriving late. In defense of the late arrivals, 6:00 p.m. is a difficult start time when you travel by train in the city.

Throughout the week, Team MLC had minimal contact with most of the church members. Because the English service went late and the team sang for the Spanish service that followed, our students had few opportunities to meet the church members. The young men stayed with Vicar Paul, while the young women stayed with a generous church family. Outside of that interaction, contact with the congregation was not a great source of encouragement for the team. Fellowship with the host congregation was not a significant part of this STM.

Each mission is different. Sometimes students report that fellowship with the church members was a highlight of their week. In this case, I am not sure that SFLC members knew who we were or why we were here. There was no information in the service folders or announcements regarding who we were. This seemed to be a missed opportunity for mutual encouragement.

On a positive note, it was a joy to see that the worshippers at SFLC looked like the people who live in Queens, New York. Too often, our WELS congregations struggle to penetrate new communities and to serve people who do not look like white Midwesterners. It was refreshing to see a congregation able to serve people of different cultures and backgrounds with the gospel and confessional Lutheranism. For such a small congregation, the singing in worship was surprisingly good. The pastors made use of

traditional hymns, even though the congregation does not look like a traditional WELS congregation. The worshippers were mainly black, Hispanic, and Asian. A few were whites, like the families of the pastors.

Team MLC appreciated the opportunities to participate in worship. E16A especially liked singing for church and working through the Spanish lyrics.”³⁶

Two other students recognized the need for flexibility in ministry, and “the ability to think and do on the fly, especially in a setting like Queens, New York.”³⁷

Saturday, March 26, 2016

Saturday was the day to see if the thousands of fliers we delivered and the contacts we made would yield a crowd of children for Sure Foundation’s Easter in the Park event. Vicar Paul and Pastor Tim were there to meet the parents and caregivers of the children. I helped setup for the event, and then observed the students in their various activities. I also shared the good news of Easter with a number of parents.

Hart Park is a typical city park that played an atypical role on that Saturday—it was the pulpit for sharing the good news of Easter with children and parents from all over the world. Made up of poured concrete, with a few trees for shade, the park dominates the block and serves the hundreds of children who live in apartment complexes across the street. Playground equipment and swings for smaller children are surrounded by convenient park benches. A basketball court serves the older children. There is plenty of room in the park to kick around a soccer ball, which the men from Team MLC did. It is an ideal place to make connections for sharing the gospel.

36. MLC student E16A, personal reflection journal, March 25, 2016.

37. MLC student E16D, personal reflection journal, March 25, 2016.

At 11:00 a.m., the temperature was a chilly and windy forty-six degrees, so the park was not full. In fact, there were only a few children in the park. Thankfully, the sun shine and the activities in the park attracted other children as time went on.

Team MLC set up two craft stations in the middle of the park, not far from the entrance. At one station, the children would create and decorate a tambourine made of paper plates. At the other station, children would make and decorate a picture of the empty tomb. The two MLC women helped the children at the craft stations. The caregivers of the children, mostly mothers, offered their assistance as well. One of the young men from MLC made chalk drawings on the park concrete and invited the children to make their own. The other young man connected with the children by playing soccer with them. Later he gathered the children together and told them the Easter story.

At noon, everyone was invited to participate in an Easter egg hunt. Each egg that was hidden in the park contained candy and a coupon for a free book. The kids were able to choose a book from a collection donated to the church.

Here is the reflection of E16B:

Before we had even fully set everything up, kids were eager to ask us about our books, crafts, and what we were doing at the park. [E16A] and I directed the craft stations and over 30 kids came through and made Easter crafts. We made decorated tambourines and a coloring sheet with a roll-away stone. Many parents came over to help with the crafts and encouraged their children. Sometimes I brought up the Easter story with the kids while working on their projects. Some children asked, ‘Why did he die? What does it mean that Jesus rose?’ What a great opportunity the Lord gave me this day! ³⁸

E16D commented, “Playing soccer with those kids and then telling them about Jesus’ resurrection was the best part of the trip for me. I learned about myself that I really

38. MLC student E16B, personal reflection journal, March 26, 2016.

enjoy working with children. I didn't know that. I also learned that events need preparation. We prepared well for that event.”³⁹

Easter in the Park was a highlight of the week for Team MLC. Despite the cool weather, it also turned out to be a great outreach opportunity. Vicar Paul and Pastor Tim were able to connect with many people, most of whom were not Christian. A few members of Sure Foundation came, including the families of the pastors and a few members of the Evangelism committee.

The Team shared the Easter message with people of many different cultures who came to the park. The team was pleasantly surprised to discover that one young mother from India and her two children were Christians. In fact, the mother was celebrating her one-year anniversary of Christian faith. “Jesus changed my life,” she said. She and her children attended a Punjabi Christian church nearby.

Many of the other parents had not heard the Easter story before. Team MLC was able to share the Easter story with a Hindu mother and her young son who were enjoying the crafts table. The mother understood that this Easter message, the resurrection of Jesus for the salvation of all people, conflicted with her Hinduism. She still encouraged her son to listen to the Easter story and to pick up a number of Easter eggs.

A young Muslim wife and mother that I had met on the street the day before came to the park. When I greeted her with an outstretched hand, she gave me a funny look and, instead of shaking my hand, barely touched a few of my fingers. I must have made a cultural mistake, but I am still not sure what I should have done differently. Thankfully, Pastor Time and Vicar Paul were getting contact information for follow-up.

39. MLC student E16D, personal reflection journal, March 26, 2016.

Another young woman we met in the park was a recent immigrant from Nepal. Pastor Tim mentioned later that a number of people from Nepal live near the park and worship the Dali Lama. Her English was not good, but she was able to express that she was having a difficult time so far in Queens. She listened politely to the story of Easter.

Overall, Easter in the Park provided an excellent means to connect with neighbors, share a brief gospel message, and gain information for follow-up. All the cultural and linguistic differences make it seem, humanly speaking, nearly impossible to attract these immigrants to Sure Foundation. What would make a young mother come to a Lutheran church when she can practice her religion in her language with people of her culture? Only God through his gospel can bring her, or anyone, to faith in the Savior.

Still, the students felt the activity was a success. “Today confirmed that I want to work with kids for my career,” wrote E16A. “Although we wanted the kids to have fun and hear the message, the real victory was that we got a bunch of contacts by talking to the parents. Having an activity for children is a great way to get people involved and interested in coming to church.”⁴⁰

E16B expressed the joy of being able to share the gospel:

These days are the best in ministry. It feels like God was smiling down on us. Being a messenger of the gospel is such a blessing and privilege. Working in New York has taught me that the zeal of ministry should never change no matter who I’m working with or where we are located. All people need to hear the good news of Christ’s plan of salvation.⁴¹

40. MLC student E16A, personal reflection journal, March 26, 2016.

41. MLC student E16B, personal reflection journal, March 26, 2016.

Easter Sunday, March 27, 2016

Then let us feast this Easter Day On Christ, the Bread of heaven;
The Word of Grace hath purged away The old and evil leaven.
Christ alone our souls will feed, He is our meat and drink indeed;
Faith lives upon no other. Hallelujah!⁴²

Easter Sunday worship was at 9:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m., with a Spanish service at 11:30 a.m. The 9:00 a.m. service was three-fourths full. The 10:30 a.m. service was completely full. The 11:30 a.m. service was also full, with many late arrivals sitting in the doorway. The Spanish service began late due to the length of the previous services, but this was not a problem because the people were a bit late as well. Thanks be to God for moving so many—members and nonmembers—to praise the resurrected Savior.

The two MLC women contributed their musical gifts to Easter worship. One sang in English and Spanish. The other accompanied with her guitar. Both gained much from this experience, as the following journal entry reveals:

Easter worship taught me how much a church really comes together to worship and praise. The congregation, the pastors, the musicians, and more all are active participants in every service. A lot has to be prepared before the services begin, like the food, the liturgy, the sermons, the songs/psalms, and more. I especially learned how vital communication is to a church. Knowing how to talk and communicate goals and expectations keeps the church together and centralized on Christ. I have grown immensely since the time I stepped off the plane in New York.⁴³

Easter breakfast was served upstairs in the Sunday School classrooms. A family whose son currently attends a WELS high school in Wisconsin prepared the meal themselves, with help setting up on Saturday from Team MLC.

42. The Lutheran Hymnal, Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands, 1932.

43. MLC student E16B, personal reflection journal, March 27, 2016.

The meals between services were the best times for Team MLC to meet and greet the members of SFLC. The men from MLC were given the task of asking church members to come up with questions to “Stump the Vicar.” This gave the students a great opportunity to explain who they were, why they were there, and what MLC does. E16C later commented: “I learned that I really like to talk to people. I enjoy hearing their story. I look forward to many years of that in the ministry. I learned that ministry isn’t always about talking. A lot of it is listening to everyone.”⁴⁴

Team MLC was able to reconnect with Edili Pichardo-Gomez, a recent graduate of MLC who teaches at Northland Lutheran High School in Wausau, Wisconsin. She was spending the week with her family in the Bronx. Edili’s mother, originally from Dominican Republic, speaks very little English and contributed little to the conversation. Edili was full of stories about her first year of teaching. She teaches all levels of Spanish, and serves as host for five international female students, who call her Mama.

I met and visited with Stephanie Ramsey, an adjunct instructor for MLC’s graduate program. She teaches at the Columbia Teachers College in Manhattan after earning her PhD in Developmental Psychology. Stephanie and her husband, a high school science teacher, have two sons, age two and seven. They live in Manhattan, which makes for a long trip to church with the boys. We talked about the challenges of raising a family in the city.

I reconnected with the family of recent MLC graduate Dave Becker. Dave’s father, mother, and sisters were visiting from Wisconsin. One of Dave’s sisters lives in

44. MLC student E16C, personal reflection journal, March 27, 2016.

Manhattan and teaches military history at Saint John's University after graduating with her PhD from West Point.

One member of Team MLC invited her parents to visit for the Easter weekend. They were enthusiastic Christians from South Attleboro, Massachusetts. We all enjoyed visiting with the family from SFLC who hosted our young women for the week—so much that we were the last to leave the Easter breakfast. The mother, father, and two daughters were prominent members of the Spanish congregation. They offered their apartment to MLC students in the future. They were also new members of the congregation who had come to SFLC through earlier canvassing efforts. That thought gave us hope as we headed for home.

Meeting the members between services made a big impact. E16B wrote:

Once all the services concluded we all ate and enjoyed a lot of fellowship with family and friends. Chatting with our host family was very delightful and strengthened my understanding of them and their love for Christ. I didn't want any of this to stop or end. I wasn't ready to leave and say goodbye. How quick seven days in a new place can open a person's eyes to gospel ministry. Praising God in all things! ⁴⁵

There was a tie for the most points earned in the Sure Foundation Holy Week Prospect Competition, so both winners were awarded SFLC umbrellas. While there were many visitors on Easter Sunday, it is very difficult to ascertain how many, if any, came as a result of the outreach work we did during Holy Week. We trust the Lord who wants all people to be saved to use the fliers Team MLC distributed during the week.

As I reflected on the week, one thought struck me: how difficult it is for SFLC to reach the thousands of immigrants who make their home in Queens. It takes an act of God to bring immigrants to a Christian church in which they will have difficulty making

45. MLC student E16B, personal reflection journal, March 27, 2016.

connections. Culture and language create powerful barriers, but the gospel is more powerful!

SFLC highlights the gospel of Jesus' resurrection to engage their neighbors at Eastertime. There is wisdom in this approach since there are a good number of neighbors who understand that Easter is a church-related holiday. There are also many in the neighborhood who worship false gods and do not know of Easter or Jesus' resurrection from the dead. For their sake too, Easter is an important event for outreach.

Holy Week is a unique week for any church. This was evident at SFLC: Instead of meetings, Bible studies, or small group studies, the congregational focus was worship. As a result we did not meet many church members during the week except at worship services, and then only briefly. This left an impression that there was little support from the members for the evangelism work being carried out. There was a definite feeling of being "hired guns" for the church, with only the pastors and vicar involved. I do not believe that this represents the attitude of the members of SFLC. We were all impressed with the mission zeal of the members we met. Both Team MLC and SFLC members would benefit from an active partnership that could facilitate a vision for outreach to a city of so many. This could be a blessing for MLC students and for the work in Queens.

After canvassing for a week in the church neighborhood, I definitely sensed that the students were feeling burned out by the lack of numerical success. The style of outreach—conversational, focused on getting follow-up information—should have led to more opportunities to share the gospel, which makes canvassing seem more enjoyable. But so many neighbors presented language barriers. Many were not home until late

afternoon. Queens is a difficult mission field. Yet in the end, the students remembered the good, as expressed here by E16B:

Rewards of ministry are always abounding. I can confidently say my attitude for the ministry has been strengthened. New York has changed my faith life, with all its new experiences and opportunities. Getting to know and create new relationships with other people who share the same faith as me, is amazing. God's word is so unique in that I can travel anywhere, 5 miles away or 5000 miles away, and his word remains true and unchanged. That right there brings immediate comfort and solace for my future ministry. Who knows where God will have me be a minister of the gospel? I can be assured that He will be with me forever and will continue to bless all aspects of the Church's ministry.⁴⁶

E16A concluded, "In ministry, it's important to stay focused on what's most important: our Savior. This week was hard and exhausting, but ending it on Easter Sunday refocused us on him. Whether or not we had new visitors come to church, we pray that our work was successful so that more people hear the wonderful Easter story."⁴⁷

46. MLC student E16B, personal reflection journal, March 27, 2016.

47. MLC student E16A, personal reflection journal, March 27, 2016.

CHAPTER 5

OUTCOMES AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

What influenced me to study for the public ministry was the death of my father during my first year in college. The comfort God gave me and my family through his Word convinced me that I wanted to share that same Word in the pastoral ministry. Thanks be to God for convincing me to take this path!

Ideally, what influences young people to train for the public ministry is the saving grace of God: To thank and praise him for his great salvation, to thank him for his grace, and to please God, young people prepare themselves for the ministry of equipping God's people to believe and serve their Savior.

Unfortunately, Christians do not always approach ministry with this influence in mind. They sometimes mistake the rewards of ministry with reasons for ministry. A young man may study for pastoral ministry because he is seeking approval. Not a terrible motivation—until he is blindsided by someone's disapproval. A young woman may want to be a Christian teacher because she loves the art of teaching math. Not a terrible motivation—until she runs into students whose apathy towards math discourages her love for it.

Many Christians are going in the name of the Lord on short-term missions. Jesus is sending them, as he first sent the Twelve, to preach the gospel and show Christian compassion and caring. He is also sending MLC students to help them better understand and appreciate the ministry to which they aspire.

Jesus has been working through Martin Luther College to send students on short-term missions in coordination with Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod since the 1980s when select pastor and teacher graduates were assigned to traveling STM teams. Since the late 1990s, para-synodical organizations like WELS Kingdom Workers have organized and coordinated short-term teams for WELS missions. Although Kingdom Workers coordinated this synod wide program, a majority of the teams were made up of MLC students. Because of the positives associated with these STMs, MLC's current administration has dedicated valuable resources to help students fill the short-term mission needs of congregations.

In debriefings, MLC students have repeatedly and persuasively testified to the blessings of such mission endeavors. Many have stated that their experience influenced them to study for ministry, or to continue studying for ministry. As director of the Daylight short-term mission program at MLC, I was gratified to hear this, and I wanted to learn more.

Jesus did much to encourage his disciples for ministry. He taught them the nature of the kingdom, and his fulfillment of kingdom promises in the Old Testament scriptures. He ministered to them, and for them. He allowed them to see his power and love in miracles of healing and resurrection. He sent the Spirit to strengthen them. And he sent his disciples on short-term missions.

MLC works to encourage ministry in a variety of ways as well. MLC students often come from the homes of ministers, or have attended Christian congregations in which members and ministers encouraged them to try ministry. MLC works to build on this budding interest through twice-daily chapels, and classes that connect learning to

God's Word and ministry applications. MLC students also encourage each other to invest their time and energy to train for ministry.

To determine how short-term missions might be used to enhance and maximize these influences for increased interest in ministry, I proposed a case study of MLC students on a STM to Sure Foundation Lutheran Church in Queens, New York. (See chapter 4 of this thesis-project for more information on this mission.) I expected that a case study of this particular mission would demonstrate the direct connection between the STM experience and student attitudes toward the gospel ministry. Through reflection journals, group interviews, and my observation, students would identify the effects of the short-term mission on their attitudes toward ministry. They would also gain insights into ministry, renewed interest in ministry, and perhaps a deeper understanding of how they fit into ministry.

The results of the case study follow. I have drawn six recurring themes from the student reflections and interviews. These same themes can also be found in the literature about short-term missions, as well as in the Bible. My hope is that these six themes will advance MLC's understanding of how STMs influence student attitudes toward preparing for the public ministry.

The six themes highlight God's work in, with, and through his disciples. While some represent activities, others are reflections and observations from seeing, doing, and reflecting outside the classroom. Most of these concepts were not unknown to the students prior to their mission, but the mission experience revealed new, personal relevance.

Some truths are better caught than taught. That is true of these six influences. The themes are culled from students' comments, organized and categorized by this writer, drawn from the mission work they accomplished. Although the students may not have generated such a list, I believe they will recognize these examples of how their short-term mission experience opened their eyes regarding God's discipling work in a mission field.

Two of the students who participated in the mission to Queens were juniors well on their way to graduating as WELS teachers. These two probably did not need much motivation to remain in and finish the program. The other two were freshmen in the preseminary program, in the first of eight years of preparation for pastoral ministry. Both men admitted they needed--and appreciated--the influences of their mission experience. All of the participants, according to their own comments, appreciated the STM for the growth they gained because of it.

Six Influences on Student Attitudes toward Ministry

God Will Prepare Me with His Word

The short-term mission experience did not begin with the flight to New York. The Daylight team spent the month before departure preparing with Bible study and prayer, utilizing the *Short-Term Missions Handbook* written by Tim Dearborn. One student, E16A, expressed her appreciation for the focus of the studies:

Before our mission trip, we spent every Tuesday and Wednesday for a month going through a short-term mission workbook that prepared us for our trip to New York. This included Bible readings that intended us to understand what to expect and prepared us for our time doing mission work. It also helped connect us to the Word and reminded us to keep Christ at the forefront of our trip.¹

1. MLC student E16A, personal reflection journal, March 21, 2016.

The students found this time together valuable not only for focusing the team, but also for helping team members better know each other and their God. Thanks to the Bible study's focus on service to the Savior, each gained valuable insight as to their own ministry gifts prior to the actual on-field work. One student wrote, "As I met with the rest of the group I would be traveling with, I learned that my gifts were mostly different than those of the other members of our group." ²

Existing literature regarding short-term missions champions pre-field preparation. Pre-field training sets a godly tone and direction for the goers, and provides opportunities for mission leaders to introduce necessary preliminary content. *The Seven Standards of Excellence Workshop Workbook: A Code of Best Practice for Short-Term Mission Practitioners*, an excellent STM resource, included pre-field training as best practice for all STM opportunities:

An excellent short-term mission prepares and equips all participants for the mutually designed outreach, and is expressed by:

- 6.1 Biblical, appropriate, and timely training
- 6.2 On-going training and equipping (pre-field, on-field, post-field)
- 6.3 Qualified trainers ³

According to Matthew 9-10, Jesus spent considerable time with pre-field training of his disciples. Matthew, the gospel writer and disciple, recorded all of the words of Jesus' pre-field teaching in Matthew 10, which is the subject of chapter 2 of this thesis-project.

2. MLC student E16A, personal reflection journal, March 21, 2016.

3. Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions, *Seven Standards of Excellence Workshop Workbook: A Code of Best Practice for Short-Term Mission Practitioners* (Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions, n.d.), 26.

There is no question that MLC will want to continue pre-field preparation in the Daylight program. The why is very simple—God prepares his people for ministry through the Word. One student expressed it this way:

Although I haven't done the trip yet, the workbook told us that we were going to see and do things we might be uncomfortable with on our trip, but we always have to look forward to the real purpose of it all: Christ. This is also true in long-term ministry; you have to understand why you're doing everything, whether you enjoy it or not, you're doing Christ's work.”⁴

While this training could take a number of different forms, the sheer number of participants makes pre-field preparation a challenge at MLC. Imagine trying to find common times for 160 students to study the Bible together. It is difficult to find a time for a team of four to study together. One idea is to deliver the material through an online platform. Another is to offer the training at set times that work well with most student schedules. Perhaps a combination of the two would be best: Face-to-face training opens up dialogue that might not emerge from an online class.

Such pre-field preparation can influence student attitudes toward public ministry. Not all students feel ready or confident of their abilities to serve a short-term mission. Time spent in God's Word, time spent with the Spirit's empowering influence, will bolster weak and reluctant witnesses.

Pre-field preparation also assures congregations that the Daylight team they receive will be ready for their assigned work. To be sure, there will always be a need for the receiving congregation to communicate with the team about responsibilities, unique situations, cultural differences, special outreach opportunities, and other elements of the short-term mission. But thoughtful preparation sets a productive direction for the goers.

4. MLC student E16A, personal reflection journal, March 21, 2016.

Giving careful attention to thoughtful preparation also answers some of the concerns of those who question the value of short-term missions: Aren't STMs just glorified vacations for young people, sometimes paid for by family and friends? Are the students truly willing and able to perform the tasks they have been asked to perform? Are the students ready to work, not just fill time between their trips to the market or beach? God's Spirit will work through training in the Word to help students see the mission value of their task. This does not guarantee that all will volunteer for the right reasons, but it will help greatly in adjusting attitudes towards the mission of Jesus Christ.

Pre-field training can build confidence in students battling doubts and insecurities. In learning about short-term missions, students will learn about, and be inspired to serve in ministry. They will be reminded of this important truth: God equips for ministry—all ministry—through his Word. The six themes in this essay provide a solid foundation for the Word that will be studied.

God Wants to Send Me on His Great Commission

Author Stephen Covey wrote, "The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing."⁵ Some might say the main thing for Christians is the good news of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ alone. Certainly, no Christian can afford to ignore the sum and substance of salvation.

That gospel creates faith, and with faith comes action. The essence of that action is love for God and neighbor. An expression of that love is the Great Commission. God

5. Stephen Covey, "Stephen Covey Quotes. BrainyQuote.com, Xplore Inc, 2018. Accessed June 20, 2018.," *BrainyQuote.com*, June 20, 2018, https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/stephen_covey_110198.

wants his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations. Love for God and for those lost without Jesus as Savior compels Christians to carry out the Great Commission. When it comes to Christian living and serving, the Great Commission is the main thing.

It sounds easy, but many forces battle against this main thing. Human activities—some vital to ordinary life, some not—crowd out thoughts of sharing the gospel. The Unholy Three—the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh—wage war against God’s people implementing the Great Commission.

Apathy and inertia often result. The proper and God-pleasing response to sinful apathy is repentance. A fruit of repentance, and a joyful response to God’s free gift of forgiveness, is carrying out the Great Commission. For some, this involves service on a short-term mission. In this case study, students found mission work not only a joyful response to God’s grace, but an effective strategy for reminding them of the importance of the Great Commission.

One member of Team MLC, E16B, reflected on this lesson after a day of canvassing:

Going out for a couple of hours this day showed me how vast the harvest field truly is. Outreach in the communities of Sure Foundation is uniquely diverse. I am simply one person, one worker, one harvester for the gospel amongst the acres and acres of fields. Yet it is amazing how the ministry and message of one can benefit the overall ministry and message of God.⁶

Following a day of sightseeing amidst the bustle of New York City sights, she observed, “New York and the surrounding New England coast need a heavier ministry and outreach program. I must have passed thousands of people, thousands of souls who

6. MLC student E16B, personal reflection journal, March 21, 2016.

need to hear the gospel now.⁷ The day off provided time for introspection and renewed determination to do Great Commission work.

It should come as no surprise that this STM opened the participants' eyes to the importance of the Great Commission. In the book *Maximum Impact Short-Term Mission*, the authors explain the purpose of STMs:

The basic nature of short-term mission allows swift, immediate response by any believer—regardless of age, culture, or experience—to the action explicitly demanded by the Gospel; allows temporary engagement by Christian people not called, or not yet called, into full-time professional ministry (realistically that's the majority of the church); allows lay non-professionals opportunity to perform what God commands of all disciples—regardless of age, gender, race, culture, training, social status, economic status, or experience.⁸

Short-term missions give every Christian an opportunity to participate in the Great Commission. Although Christians can and should do this work in their own communities, participation in short-term missions to meet the ministry needs of congregations who request help often encourages Christians to be more aware of and active in carrying out the Great Commission where they are. Sharing the gospel and experiencing the fruits of faith created by the gospel creates an awareness and desire to act in the hearts of participants. This helps explain the popularity of short-term missions.

Not everyone agrees. STM studies have shown that mission awareness does not last.⁹ Recently I heard a troubling story: the money spent by one church to cover the costs of a short-term mission to Mexico to help with church repairs would have been enough to hire local carpenters for a year.

7. MLC student E16B, personal reflection journal, March 23, 2016.

8. Roger Peterson, *Maximum Impact Short-Term Mission: The God-Commanded Repetitive Deployment of Swift, Temporary Non-Professional Missionaries* (Minneapolis, MN: Stem Press, 2003), 16.

9. David A. Livermore, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence*, Updated edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 57.

STM leaders will want to heed these cautions and shape their STMs accordingly. On the other hand, it is no surprise to Jesus, the Lord of the Church, that sinful people will make foolish mistakes in pursuit of his Great Commission. Yet, he still sends people, and by his grace, lives are changed.

I encourage those who criticize short-term missions as a waste of money and manpower to speak with the students who served on a STM, or the churches they helped. They will hear enthusiasm for accomplishing Kingdom goals. Students will be re-energized to do the difficult academic work needed to prepare for ministry. Church members will be inspired to invite a neighbor to church, or plan another outreach event.

Perhaps the best way to discover the value of STMs is try a short-term mission trip and see what God is doing. With such an experience, critics can become part of the solution to correct the wrongs and maximize the blessings of STMs.

Of course, it would be wise to point to the words and works of Jesus, especially those recorded in Matthew 9 and 10:

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”¹⁰

Compassion moved Jesus to action. The plentiful harvest moved Jesus to send his Twelve with his gospel message, enhanced by deeds of compassion:

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, proclaim this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.”¹¹

10. Matthew 9:35-38

11. Matthew 10:5-8

Jesus' words speak for themselves. To help the disciples catch his compassion for the harassed and helpless, he sent them to share his kingdom with them. The Gospel writer Matthew does not tell us what the disciples did on this STM, but with this experience, and the Spirit's power at Pentecost, the disciples became the missionaries that went into the world with the message of the risen Christ.

With the same Spirit's power, such a ministry plan still works today. Every congregation and school prays for future church workers who will be mission-minded ministers of the gospel. A short-term mission is an answer to that prayer. Some short-term missionaries will take a mission mindset home and immediately look for people with whom they can share the gospel. Some might let that mission mindset revive them when they are slogging through Greek vocabulary and lesson plans and the ministry seems a hundred years away. In the future, some might be inspired to pattern an outreach project after the short-term mission they did. Some might even request a team to help them with their mission efforts, so they can share that experience with students studying for the ministry. Once they reach the ministry, their words from the pulpit or podium will include encouragement for young people to consider the ministry. The urgency to share the gospel will be an ongoing theme.

To be honest, if mission-mindedness were the only influence resulting from a short-term mission, I am convinced that the time, effort, and resources invested in that mission would be worth it. There is something special about carrying out the Great Commission. That special something cannot be replicated in a classroom or inspired by a sermon. A world of harassed and helpless sinners needs it. We who know and trust Jesus as our Savior need it, so we can joyfully praise him for his gift of salvation and extend his

gracious invitation to the world. A church body served by ministers eager to share the gospel is a church body that God will use to save souls.

God Will Sustain Me in Adversity

The Shepherd loves those without a Shepherd. The Shepherd also loves those whom he calls his sheep. He sustains the sheep he sends to serve him in ministry. God sustained the MLC Daylight team during times of adversity through his Word and his people.

When asked to name the most impactful elements of this short-term mission, E16D responded, “Getting turned down so often. People went out of their way to avoid our message.”¹² Another agreed, “One lady opened the door to listen, but as soon as we mentioned church she said she had something in the kitchen and closed the door.”¹³

These MLC students experienced the difficulty of door-to-door canvassing. Often the people being canvassed were not home, and those who were seemed reluctant to engage in conversation with the stranger at the door. Some might not consider rejection to be adversity. After all, no one hurt them or even chased them away. Nevertheless, the cumulative effects of rejection take a toll.

Some of the STM literature discussed the damage, or potential damage, that short-term missionaries can cause if the mission is poorly planned or executed. But little is written about the damage short-term missionaries might experience as they minister in the name of the Lord. This portion of the *Seven Standards of Excellence in Short-term Missions* did address the challenge of adversity by acknowledging that not all short-term

12. John Boeder, “Focus Group,” Transcription of Audio Recording, March 28, 2016.

13. Boeder, “Focus Group.”

missions will see success in term of results:

We desire that all our STM methods and activities produce lasting fruit (John 15:16). We acknowledge that such fruit can be souls, fruit of the Spirit, and any level of Kingdom growth or transformation in the lives of any of the participants. We further acknowledge that we may not always see the spiritual fruit in the time or in the way we had hoped, and that other people whom we may never meet may also be part of the fruit-bearing process; some plant, some water—but God makes it grow and produces the fruit.¹⁴

Jesus spent over half of his Great Mission Discourse, Matthew 10, warning his disciples of the adversity they would experience for the sake of his name. “I am sending you out like sheep among wolves,” he told them. “You will be hated by everyone because of me.”¹⁵

To encourage his disciples, Jesus interspersed words of warning with words of comfort in Matthew 10. Yet these words of warning speak for themselves. Disciples of Jesus, then and today, can expect adversity for the sake of the gospel. Betrayal, persecution, intimidation—these are just some of the weapons Satan will use to discourage missionaries, even short-term missionaries. Yet the Shepherd loves his sheep. Luther commented, “And he allows none of you to be afflicted apart from his definitive knowledge and will, even though it may appear that He has forgotten and abandoned you. Certainly if He does not neglect even the most worthless sparrow, much less does He neglect any one of you.”¹⁶

How did God sustain the MLC Daylight team when they experienced doubt and disappointment? He sustained them through the good news of salvation proclaimed in daily Bible study, personal devotions, and Holy Week worship services. He also gave them glimpses of victory. E16A commented, “To see so many former unbelievers now

14. Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions, *Seven Standards*, 20.

15. Matthew 10:16, 22

16. Martin Luther, *Luther's Works: Volume 67*. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2015), 108.

serving God faithfully at Sure Foundation Lutheran Church is very encouraging. We see the power of God at work in their lives. We learned not to place limits on God.”¹⁷

God also sustained them as they encouraged one another. One student commented that when he felt anxious after a few closed doors, his partner encouraged him, “We are not a nuisance. We are here to spread the Word of God. We are instruments of God.”¹⁸

The student missionaries learned that time encouragement from the Word will not only benefit them, but their co-workers as well. E16B commented: “Our responsibility is to share the Word and to stay true to the Word; show others it is important. We could have done more to encourage one another in our faith. This trip solidified our desire both to help others in their faith lives, but to take responsibility for our own faith lives so we can help others.”¹⁹

Because of the promise of persecution and disappointment, the training of short-term missionaries must include some of Jesus’ warnings. Such warnings provide an example to follow in rejection—the example of Jesus himself. Such warnings help establish realistic expectations for mission work. Although we should never doubt God’s power to accomplish immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine, missionaries should not be surprised, take it personally, or blame themselves when unbelievers reject the gospel. It will happen. That does not give missionaries an excuse to quit or feel sorry for themselves. The Shepherd loves his sheep. He has set us an example of living and dying for the sake of the gospel. He has even numbered the hairs on our heads. He will

17. Boeder, “Focus Group.”

18. Boeder, “Focus Group.”

19. Boeder, “Focus Group.”

sustain his missionaries in adversity through his Word. What an excellent lesson for future gospel ministers.

God Has Made Ministry a Team Activity

“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”²⁰ In the vocabulary of the Holy Spirit, ministry is a team activity. Through the gospel, God empowers his people to love each other, serve each other, and serve with each other, all for the common good.

When God’s people work together, usually good things happen. Teamwork is no guarantee of success, yet it does take away some of Satan’s most effective weapons to disrupt ministry—disharmony, envy, gossip, suspicion, judgmental attitudes, and a lack of love.

College is not a team activity. Some of Satan’s disruptive weapons are wielded on a college campus. Consider the gossip on a small college campus. Consider the envy as classmates compete for grades, honors, athletic accomplishments, and the like.

Modern American culture fosters narcissism and entitlement. Modern church-hopping and -shopping cultivates a consumer mentality among Christians. How can MLC foster a spirit of community and fellowship in students preparing for the ministry?

Team MLC team reported that their mission taught them about teamwork:

One student noted that our team of five semi-random people got along though we were not that close coming into the trip. We were able to work together and become friends. This is a great lesson for future ministry on a faculty or serving as associate pastors somewhere. There was good team unity and effective use of individual strengths. The students noted that God worked in them all a serving attitude.²¹

20. 1 Corinthians 12:27

21. Boeder, “Focus Group.”

The team reflected on teamwork: “We learned to think about when it is appropriate to be the leader and when to be the follower. If someone else has more experience, let them lead.” Instead of arguing over who should lead, they learned to ask, “What is the best way to get things done? Listen to all ideas and be willing to accept the better one. Learn to work with people and be a team member.” They learned to value the gifts and ideas of others, “It’s about trust and about listening to others. It is so important to let people lead or serve by using their gifts appropriately. It is important to listen respectfully and not always be the one talking.” ²²

No doubt these students already knew about the necessity of teamwork. But to know and to do are not the same. To know by experience is to learn a lesson well. This team of four was really a pair of twos. The two junior women (in the teacher program) were friends and had served together on a previous short-term mission. The two young men were freshmen classmates who were not necessarily friends before the mission. So the fact that this team cooperated—not just on superficial matters, but on ministry matters—is truly a work of the Father of the harvest field.

Teamwork is important not only between teammates, but it is just as important for the relationships between missionaries and those they serve with the gospel. The team was impressed that the church they served, Sure Foundation Lutheran Church, also modeled teamwork. One student summed up the many ways the church members supported the team’s work with lodging, food and transportation: “They treated us like one of their own.” ²³

22. Boeder, “Focus Group.”

23. Boeder, “Focus Group.”

A study of STM literature affirms the blessings of teamwork as well. *Short-Term Missions Workbook* author Tim Dearborn maintains, “This is one of the reasons God sends us in mission: to learn to delight in differences and demonstrate to the world the quality of community that Paul describes in Galatians 3:28.”²⁴

Standard #3 of the *Seven Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions* highlights the ideal attitude of an effective ministry teammate: “We commit to screen, select, and train goer-guest participants...who will place themselves in a learning, humble, servant, teachable position.”²⁵

Ultimately, our God is the perfect example of love and unity. We catch a glimpse of that perfect teamwork in Matthew 9 when Jesus invited the disciples to pray to the Father for workers in his harvest field.

Jesus upheld the blessings of teamwork by sending the Twelve two-by-two (Mark 6:7). He also instructed his disciples to get along with and rely on the generosity of those who heard and believed their message.

Whatever town or village you enter, search there for some worthy person and stay at their house until you leave. As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet.²⁶

Jesus pronounced a blessing on those who would support his disciples on their Way: “Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.”²⁷

24. Tim Dearborn, *Short-Term Missions Workbook: From Mission Tourists to Global Citizens*, Workbook edition. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2003), 23.

25. Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions, *Seven Standards*, 22.

26. Matthew 10:11-14

27. Matthew 10:40

Jesus' heart of love comes through in these words of instruction. Love those you serve with the gospel. Appreciate their generosity. Love them enough not to compromise the message, even if some reject it. Love your Father who sent you and provides for you through his people.

God has made ministry a team activity. He models the love teammates need in the Godhead. He empowers his disciples with that love. Yet ministry squabbles, feuds, and fights continue to give Satan a foothold in congregations that confess Christ. Seeing harmony in ministry will help future ministers of the gospel battle the selfish sinful nature that causes so much turmoil. Future ministers treated with love by fellow believers will want to follow that loving example in their own ministries.

The common cause of carrying out Christ's Great Commission can bring out the best in people. STMs encourage future ministers of the gospel by showing them that working together and appreciating each other's gifts is the way of blessing for God's people.

God Will Help Me Recognize My Gifts for Ministry

God used this short-term mission in New York to help these student missionaries recognize their gifts for ministry. E16A commented, "It was great to see those (ministry) gifts blossom on this trip."²⁸ E16C observed, "We all learned independence for getting around and doing the work assigned to us."²⁹ One student learned that he really liked working with kids, something he had not known before.

28. Boeder, "Focus Group."

29. Boeder, "Focus Group."

In addition to learning about themselves, the students also saw themselves serving as part of a mission team. This enlightened them to the blessings of team ministry. E16A noted, “I learned that my gifts were mostly different than those of the other members of our group. God will be using me in a different way than my other team members. I also learned that God is able to use me in ways I never knew. God can use me to canvass, sing, play instruments, evangelize, and do many more things.”³⁰

After the trip this same student commented, “It would be cool if I could learn more skills that could be used in ministry. I want to serve people better.”³¹ Another student said, “I want to learn more Spanish so I can use it in the ministry. Sometimes I knew what was going on, but sometimes I did not. I need to listen to my Spanish professor more.”³²

Short-term missions literature emphasizes the importance of effective follow-up to build on the personal spiritual gifts and interests discovered through missions:

We acknowledge that thorough follow-through will help participants process the STM, apply lessons learned and promote continued personal growth (spiritual, emotional, intellectual, cross-cultural, relational, and other growth.) We also acknowledge that thorough follow-through can help participants integrate the entire STM into life for kingdom purposes, solidify transforming life change, and provide opportunity for continued personal commitment to Christ and the people of his world.³³

MLC is well suited for thorough follow-up, since most of the students who serve on a short-term mission will return to campus. A word of caution is in place for the kind of follow-through MLC will do. In my experience today’s Christians would rather study

30. MLC Student E16A, personal reflection journal,” March 21, 2016.

31. Boeder, “Focus Group.”

32. Boeder, “Focus Group.”

33. Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Missions, *Seven Standards*, 28.

their own spiritual gifts analysis than the words of Jesus. Putting the best construction on that choice, we might say that in learning about their own gifts, Christians are learning about their potential for service. They are discovering more reasons to praise a gracious and generous God.

A less generous explanation is that in the struggle between the old and new natures, the self-interest of the sinful nature shifts the Christian's focus off the greatness of God and onto self. Ministry training, for all the good accomplished, lends itself to this inclination toward self-interest. Admissions personnel encourage young people to examine their gifts for ministry. Called workers and parents point out the gifts that identify a good ministry candidate: people person, love for the Lord, good communicator, team player, and others.

In preparing his disciples for their short-term mission to the lost sheep of Israel, Jesus did not indicate that he wanted his disciples to focus on their personal spiritual gifts. Nowhere in Matthew 10 did Jesus tell the disciples to use this experience to learn about themselves and the gifts the Father had given them for ministry. Are their gifts assumed because Jesus selected them for this ministry? Possibly. The Bible does not explain why Jesus chose those twelve to be his Twelve. Could it be that the gifts of the disciples are less significant to their ministry than the Giver of those gifts? Could it be that the giftedness of the missionaries was less important than their faithfulness to their mission, regardless of their gifts?

What makes this a pertinent question? In studying the students' comments, there was no shortage of personal insights gleaned from their experiences. This is not a criticism, since ministry training lends itself toward self-analysis, especially if a student

feels vocational doubt. Questions in the group interview and the daily journal prompted personal reflection about lessons learned and gifts used for ministry. Jesus' lack of emphasis on personal spiritual gifts is striking, and significant to our understanding of mission and ministry. Often it seems that young people approach ministry as if ministry is about me, and my gifts, and my self-actualization of those gifts. Yet in Matthew 10, Jesus makes it clear that ministry, even a short-term mission, is about the Father's harvest and the Son's message of salvation.

Ministry gifts serve the greater good of ministering to people for the Father's harvest by proclaiming the Son. Jesus wants his people to reflect on their gifts, and to make ministry decisions based on those gifts. More importantly, he wants them to rely more on the Giver than the gifts. He wants his disciples to focus on faithful use of his gifts, no matter what they are. He wants them to know the power for success is not in the gifts, but in the Word of the Savior. He invites us to learn and acquire additional gifts, not for personal gain, but to reach more souls with the gospel, giving glory to his name.

Through service on a short-term mission, these future church workers recognized some of the ministry gifts God gave them. They saw themselves as part of a team, using those gifts to accomplish more together than they ever could alone. They were motivated to acquire additional gifts by the unique field in which they served and the needs they saw. All of this they gained while offering valuable service to an outreaching congregation in Queens, New York.

These students would not have learned the same lessons in the classroom. Even though students recognize some ministry gifts through classroom preparation, students who participate in a short-term mission are able to identify the specific gifts needed for

future ministry and what makes those gifts important. God gives student missionaries improved insight into themselves and into working as a mission team. He motivates them to learn and grow in the classroom and out to better prepare themselves for ministry. What a blessing for future ministers of the gospel. What an opportunity to build on this insight for future years of training!

God Will Deepen My Understanding of Ministry

The Need for Flexibility

For those who are interested in ministry, short-term mission experiences offer incredible opportunities to deepen understanding. Anyone seeking ministry examples and applications will not be disappointed, no matter the quality or success of the experience. In this case, the STM to Queens, New York, the mission was a quality experience. The students gleaned greater understanding of and appreciation for ministry in general, and specifically for the ministry taking place in Queens.

E16D observed, “Successful ministry, and people in ministry, need flexibility and the ability to think and do on the fly, especially in a setting like Queens, New York.”³⁴ E16A noted, “In the ministry, sometimes you can’t plan for everything. We expected to get all of our flyers out this week by knocking, but we had to just hand them out. Ministry will be full of good and bad surprises. But we need to be prepared for everything and be flexible for when plans change.”³⁵

34. MLC Student E16D, “personal reflection journal,” March 21, 2016, 2.

35. MLC Student E16A, “personal reflection journal,” March 21, 2016, 4.

Flexibility can produce perseverance. One student commented, “Door to door is a good illustration of how ministry is. You can get knocked down many times, but we rebound from being turned down and keep going.”³⁶

Flexibility can lead to a desire for adaptability in ministry. In the course of a week in Queens, Team MLC observed that culture created a natural bias toward or away from Christianity. For example, our students observed that some neighbors from Latin America who came from a Roman Catholic background were more interested in a Christian church like SFLC because they were already Christian. Other cultures were antichristian or pro-false religions like Buddhism or Hinduism. For them to come to Christianity might mean losing a family connection or relationship. Think how difficult it would be to break away from the culture and the religion that you came from and congregated around as an immigrant. Thankfully, the gospel has the power to break those bonds. Mission minded Christians aware of this tendency will want to be flexible so they can forge new relationships with different people of a different culture.

The team concluded that when it comes to people of different cultures, we know more than we think we do because people have universal needs (which is why a Nepali mother would bring her child to Easter in the park), and yet we know very little at the same time. We need to keep reaching out while also examining our attitudes toward other cultures.³⁷

In his book on short-term missions, *Serving with Eyes Wide Open*, David Livermore argues that missionaries need openness and flexibility as they interact

36. Boeder, “Focus Group.”

37. Boeder, “Focus Group.”

with people of different cultures. Here he explains the need for cultural intelligence (CQ), which he maintains causes mindful missionaries to adjust the way they interact with people of difference cultures:

CQ Strategy is the degree to which we're mindful and aware when we interact cross-culturally, and it's our ability to plan in light of their awareness. CQ Strategy helps us turn off the cruise control we typically use as we interact with people so that we can intentionally question our assumptions. As we interpret the cues received through CQ Strategy, we continually adjust our CQ Knowledge and plan for how to behave appropriately.³⁸

Cross-cultural service requires awareness, strategy, and adaptability. So will almost every short-term mission experience. Unfortunately, cultural intelligence cannot be attained through pre-field preparation alone. Short-term missions contribute to an understanding of the need for further learning about cultural adaptability.

Jesus did not mention flexibility in his Mission Discourse in Matthew 10, but he certainly taught the disciples awareness and adaptability. For example, he said, "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves." He alerted the disciples to be aware of their surroundings. He warned them that, like sheep in danger among wolves, so they would be in danger on their mission. Instead of answering danger with violence, Jesus urged the disciples to be innocent and defenseless as doves. Instead of expecting goodwill, Jesus taught the disciples to expect mistreatment, but never to compromise what cannot be compromised.

It is my experience that ministry students accept the need for flexibility in ministry, but often lack the experience to understand how adaptability will challenge them. Flexibility is a lesson best learned by doing, and in a relatively safe situation. Short-term missions provide an excellent climate for learning the need for adaptability.

38. Livermore, *Serving with Eyes*, 142.

Seeing flexibility in action—with results—probably means the learning will last longer, offering greater influence for change.

The Need to Prioritize Ministry

In Isaiah 55:11, the Lord assures his people that his Word will always achieve the purpose for which he sent it. In contrast, it seems that our purposes for short-term missions are rarely achieved. So much of a mission plan is out of anyone's control, and can quickly go a different way than intended. When mission leaders are privileged to see their purposes achieved, they want to celebrate those blessings and give glory to God. So thanks be to God for this goal being achieved: as a result of this STM experience, students placed a higher priority on public gospel ministry.

In answer to a question about the impact of the short-term mission on their interest in ministry, each participant said their interest in ministry had increased. One student said he was now more interested in the ministry than he was before. Another responded, "I needed this trip. Gotta go to Greek first hour and the wind hurts my face. Then [we] go to New York and see all these people who want to hear about Jesus. This trip charge[d] the batteries." ³⁹

The students agreed that the short-term mission in Queens had a huge impact on their responsibility towards preparing for ministry: "This trip solidified [our] desire both to help others in their faith lives, [and] to take responsibility for our own faith lives so we can help others." ⁴⁰

Because the students enjoyed the mission work, they were eager to participate in another mission. E16C announced, "Here am I. Send me." He also noted, "Those new

39. Boeder, "Focus Group."

40. Boeder, "Focus Group."

and different ways of doing things can be applicable to ministry no matter where you are. It is healthy and energizing to get new ideas of how things work.”⁴¹

Those who study short-term missions have found similar results. The authors of *Maximum Impact Short-Term Mission*, cited a study by Peterson and Peterson which found statistically significant and “substantial changes in prayer, financial giving, commitment to world mission, mission-related activities and education, and in feelings about returning to the mission field as a result of [goer-guests’] short-term mission.”⁴²

Elsewhere in this paper I have made the point that Jesus sent the Twelve on a short-term mission in part to train them for their mission task after his ascension. For example, the guidance Jesus gives in Matthew 10:18-20 seems to apply to the work of the disciples after Easter, not before. Jesus intended this mission experience to prepare his disciples not only for their immediate mission among the Jews, but also for their long-term service to him as apostles.

Motivated by the gospel, empowered by the Spirit, the Eleven became Jesus’ witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. How did the short-term mission (Matthew 10) equip them for their future mission? This side of heaven, we will never know. From the Gospels we know their training was far from over. We know that Pentecost empowered them for service. All we can say is that this mission contributed to the apostles they became. Without a doubt, the same can be said for the impact of short-term missions on the training of future gospel ministers.

41. Boeder, “Focus Group.”

42. Peterson, *Maximum Impact*, 143.

The Need to Trust God

Through their STM, Team MLC learned a truth vital to ministry—God is trustworthy. E16C said, “All the power comes from God. I knew it before, but now I know it by experience.”⁴³ Another added, “To see so many former unbelievers now serving God faithfully at Sure Foundation is very encouraging. We see the power of God at work in their lives. We learned not to place limits on God.”⁴⁴

Seeing God’s work at Sure Foundation, they grew in their trust in God’s promise to make disciples. They grew in their confidence that God’s powerful Word converts and empowers Christian love. They also grew in their faith that God can use them, and empower them, to serve in ministry. The group agreed with this statement: “We believe God will equip us to meet the challenges and prosper in them.”⁴⁵

There is solid consensus in the literature about short-term missions that God is working in and through these mission efforts. Most writings emphasize God’s work of making disciples. The study of Matthew 10 reveals that God is making disciples through the process of serving him in ministry. By sending the Twelve on their own, he taught them to look upward—to trust him for daily needs. He promised to preserve them with strength to persevere in trials, and he did. God’s people can count on God to deliver. He is trustworthy. What confidence that gives those who want to serve him in missions and ministry!

43. Boeder, “Focus Group.”

44. Boeder, “Focus Group.”

45. Boeder, “Focus Group.”

Action Items for Long-Term Impact from Short-term Missions

Building on the Six Short-Term Missions Influences

It is gratifying to see that short-term missions will have a significant influence on ministry training at MLC for the near future. MLC is implementing an exciting new short-term mission program: every student, starting with the freshman class of 2017-18, will be required to participate in a Daylight short-term mission before they reach their junior year at MLC. This thesis-project has shaped the direction of MLC's new short-term mission emphasis, and will continue to provide direction for the future. In addition, MLC's new Master of Arts in Theological Studies will feature a new course called, *Maximum Impact Short-term Missions*, which I will have the privilege of creating and teaching. So current church workers in MLC's Master's program will have the opportunity to learn what to do, and avoid, to receive the blessings of a STM.

Based on the themes created by the students, and informed by my years of leading the Daylight program at MLC, I have identified a number of action items to improve the Daylight program. I have categorized them according to their appropriate place in the STM process:

Pre-field Action Items

1. Streamline the online application process for students and congregations.
2. Partner with congregations that will create short-term mission experiences that will be the most positively influential for ministerial encouragement.
3. Partner with congregations in urban areas that will provide positive experiences.
4. Partner with mission boards and campus ministries to identify experiences that will have a great impact on Kingdom growth.
5. Highlight and study the influences described in this chapter for incorporation into pre-field training.

On-field Action Items

1. Encourage MLC students to daily study God's Word as a team, and journal as individuals, using a study such as the one printed in the Daylight Journal.

2. Ask congregation leaders to explain the congregation's unique ministry, history, and community.
3. Encourage congregational leaders to create opportunities for MLC students to fellowship with members of the church for mutual encouragement.
4. Equip every Daylight student with materials for a ministry recruitment presentation.
5. Facilitate communication so that each team can share pictures, videos, and other mementos of their experience with the MLC campus family.
6. Encourage each team to make a mid-week check-in with a member of the MLC Daylight staff.

Post-field Action Items

1. Provide each student missionary with a thorough, honest debriefing that will help the student integrate the experience into his or her training for ministry.
2. Encourage students to forge a relationship with the congregation they served during their time at MLC. Students might communicate with the congregation each year, or meet with other student teams who served the same church.
3. Encourage each team to create a remembrance for themselves and the church they served. It could be a book of pictures, a video, or a song written in honor of the ministry.
4. Study the influence of this new emphasis on STM by surveying students about the influence of the experience on their attitudes toward the ministry. Such a study might also include looking at retention rates of those students who had a mission experience and comparing those rates with those who did not have an STM experience.

This is by no means an exhaustive list of action items, but it is a start towards building on the positive influences identified in this thesis-project. As the items are implemented, the list may change and need to be updated accordingly. I expect the Daylight staff will meet to discuss this list and begin to assign ownership of these tasks to the appropriate members.

Questions for Further Study

This study has been a catalyst for action at Martin Luther College. The WELS College of Ministry has started to encourage every student to participate in a short-term mission before they reach their junior year in college. The first year of this initiative went

well. Approximately 25 percent of the student body—most of whom were freshmen—participated in a short-term mission. (The program of every-student involvement targeted freshmen and will proceed with next year's freshmen and sophomores.) Students were very pleased with their mission experiences. Congregations were grateful for the help.

This project has raised questions that will continue to impact the program in the future. How will MLC's new emphasis on every student STMs affect student retention and attitudes? How will it affect their compassion for the lost and their trust in the Father? How long will the impact last? What can we do to prolong the positive effects? What other religious actions, besides interest in public ministry, were influenced? Are the influences described in this project the ones we want to continue for our students? Are there other influences we wish to see? How might we introduce different outcomes to the program?

MLC should consider how different STMs might produce different influences. Should MLC recommend certain missions based on the expected influences? Would this be a way to accelerate student learning? Would it strengthen ministry interest and aptitude?

My hope is that what has been learned in this study will be a springboard to further study of the blessings that God gives to short-term missionaries and those they serve. My hope for the Daylight program is that it will continue to increase student interest in and commitment to the gospel ministry.

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